

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07098693 4



3-1137

11/22/2022





Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2008 with funding from  
Microsoft Corporation



*THE ARTIST'S POINT OF VIEW*



# THE ARTIST'S POINT OF VIEW

*EMBRACED IN A SERIES OF LETTERS ON  
LANDSCAPE PAINTING AND KINDRED  
TOPICS*

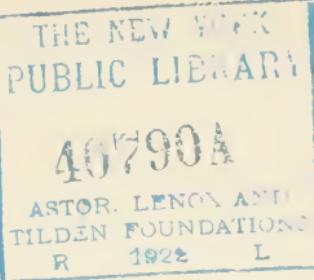
BY

ROYAL HILL MILLESON



CHICAGO  
A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1912



COPYRIGHT

A. C. McCLURG & CO.

1912

---

Published, September, 1912

PRESS OF THE VAIL COMPANY  
COSHOCOTON, U. S. A.

*THE ARTIST'S POINT OF VIEW*



# THE ARTIST'S POINT OF VIEW

*Containing Matter of an Introductory Nature, Along with Some Gratuitous Advice*

Chicago, Ill., *March 10, 19—.*

MR. CHESTER NORMANDIN,  
BEECHWOOD, OHIO.

DEAR SIR—Your letter of recent date is received. You speak flatteringly of my work and request to be informed if it will be convenient for me to give you lessons in painting. In reply I must acknowledge my inability to be of any service to you in that way. It is just possible, had the writer remained in Beechwood for a protracted period and you had seen proper to submit examples of your work for his criticism, he might thus have rendered you some slight

assistance; and doubtless, in return, you could and would have done as much for him. During my brief sojourn there, Mr. H. showed me several pictures you had painted, and I must say that their evident sincerity and spontaneous character interested me greatly.

Observation and considerable experience have led me to think that each individual's method and style of painting are so distinctly a growth or development of his own mental faculties as to render the difficulties of imparting them to another wholly insurmountable. If I myself do not know how my pictures are produced, how can it be possible for me to teach you? By directing your attention to some of the first principles—that is to say, by assisting you in recalling those fundamental truths in the painter's curriculum with which probably you are already familiar—I might aid you in the painting of your pictures, but not in a lifetime could I teach any one how to paint

## *POINT OF VIEW*

mine. Unless you could think my thoughts you could not paint my kind of a picture; nor is it desirable that you should do so, because yours might be much the better.

Of those underlying principles of art, whatever knowledge I have has been acquired by studying carefully the best as well as the worst efforts of recognized artists, and through the reading of good books treating of art, along with that which may have come to me during a limited course of academic studies in drawing. To acquire any sort of proficiency in draughtsmanship, you should if possible attend a regular art school for a year or two at least; if unable to do this, then do the best you can without it. It goes without saying that the careful study of all grades of pictures, more especially of good ones, and the perusal of books on art, must prove beneficial to the young painter.

That a fine picture or a finished drawing can be easily or quickly produced I have yet to learn. Only amateurs or persons having

a mercenary object in view talk of clever things being "dashed off." The individual who has never painted a picture is the one who speaks in that way. A sketch with the appearance of having been thus handled almost invariably is the identical one upon which its author worked long and carefully; and conversely the production with a labored look may trace the origin of its troubles to undue haste in the early stages of its unfortunate career.

In one who has some native talent, correct drawing and good taste, supplemented by creative instinct and old-fashioned industry, go to make pictures that are tolerably certain to command respect. Drawing is taught in schools established and equipped for the purpose, and correct taste is the result of years of cultivation. Natural good taste is all right as far as it goes, but it must yield to the refined faculty, precisely as our primitive manners, however well-intentioned, are eclipsed by those of polished

## *POINT OF VIEW*

individuals. Refined taste and politeness resemble Art in that they are concepts of the highest development of civilization.

I find this letter is stringing out, and its writer drifting into waters which may be beyond his depth; but I believe the earnest tone of your note is to blame for this. Like Tennyson's

—infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light,

it has aroused my sympathy, and I desire to help you if it is within my power to do so. Though without the pleasure of your personal acquaintance, I should suggest, if my advice were sought by one in your position and showing the same degree of promise, that you continue painting what you are pleased to call commercial pictures to gain a livelihood, at the same time persevering as opportunities present themselves in your studies of nature and the higher expressions of art.

*THE ARTIST'S*

Trusting to have the pleasure of hearing  
from you again,

I have the honor to be, Your Obedient  
Servant, etc.

## SECOND LETTER

*Consisting, Like the First, of Generalizations for the Most Part*

MY DEAR SIR—I am pleased to learn from the contents of the letter lying before me, which came yesterday, that your correspondent's well-meant effusion gave no offense; on the contrary you seem to have derived enjoyment from its perusal. Thank you. And is it really your opinion that I should write a book? Well—perhaps; anyway I am indebted to you for an idea. For books your humble servant has a particular fondness, but never imagined he could write one, which isn't saying he has not desired the gift. That one never knows what he can do until he has tried, is a precept I fully endorse; but what I do know, is, that what I don't know, if comprised in a

single volume, would be a monstrous affair, well calculated to stagger prospective readers.

It is gratifying to learn that you appreciate and intend to follow the suggestion with which I closed my former communication, namely, that you should continue painting for a livelihood the pictures you know how to paint without relinquishing the serious study of art. The term "commercial pictures," as I understand it, signifies hurried productions of commonplace character along threadbare lines, simple sketches somewhat analogous to the writings of journalistic novices, whose motto perforce is to "fill the space—with good stuff, if you can, but fill it up and—get your money." You might do worse. Better painters than either you or I have traversed that road on their way to the goal. In doing this, disregard the unkind sneers of more fortunate individuals who happen to have the means wherewith to study "art for art's sake." If you

## *POINT OF VIEW*

permit yourself to be floored by that group you are lacking in the moral strength essential to an artist. Their "art for art's sake," though praiseworthy, not infrequently ends in disappointment for themselves and their friends, while another who paints because he is full of the idea—fairly overflowing with it; who paints in spite of himself, regardless of the sacrifices his devotion imposes; and for whom the pursuit is a passion impossible to be repressed, gains well-merited recognition in the end.

A young artist with the fairest of prospects before him once jocularly declared in the writer's hearing that he would be "scared to death" if any of his pictures were to sell—meaning thereby to convey the idea that if his paintings possessed selling qualities the fact of itself would imply that a taint of commercialism lurked somewhere in their make-up; or, to express it differently, he would have us think that by reason of their superlatively good qualities his pic-

tures soared aloft in an atmosphere rarer than that of commercialism. As a matter of fact other and more substantial reasons existed for their unsalableness.

Not a few well-intentioned students, after having spent years in drawing from casts, still life and the nude, until they are prepared to depict any object or group of objects properly placed before them, fail utterly when demands are made on their constructive, imaginative or creative powers. They are able to sit all day long and draw not only the model but the plaudits of their companions, without bestowing much thought on the task in hand; and there it all ends. Over in Paris they say "If you can't draw you can't paint," which is true as gospel; but they do not say that one can paint because he can draw. To employ the inelegant expression of a bantering artist, there are skillful draughtsmen who can not paint pictures "for sour apples." The favored individual is he who combines the

## *POINT OF VIEW*

subtleness of thorough draughtsmanship with a healthy imagination, creative ability, refined taste and ardent, abiding love for the beautiful.

It is to be hoped, my dear Mr. Norman-din, that in whatsoever your correspondent writes, you will take him seriously but not too literally. Far be it from me to undertake to formulate a set of close rules for any one to follow. Prescribed standards for endeavor in any sphere of original thought are of necessity arbitrary. While you are yet young assiduously improve your mental faculties while they are active, receptive, tenacious and analytical, and rest assured that in the fullness of time the harvest will be yours. In the conduct of life have regard for the noble sentiment embodied in Ella Wheeler Wilcox's poem entitled "Artist and Man":

If in thy too brief day thou must neglect  
Thy labor or thy life, let men detect  
Flaws in thy work! while their most searching gaze

Can fall on nothing which they may not praise  
In thy well-chiseled character.

Put aside all thoughts of pecuniary success, and strive to paint a picture—a thing of beauty, grace, harmony, balance, flowing line, breadth, simplicity. The poetry of art is higher than its realism, notwithstanding the latter phase of it is the ultimate foundation stone in the student's pillar of knowledge. While keeping ever in view this stubborn fact, from the start the true artist will aim to symbolize nature's seraphic song by robing his creations in the pure unsullied garb of poetic fancy. He should never reject the world's criticism of his work, but by earnest effort endeavor to disarm it.

A picture is made up of lines, masses, colors and graduated effects of light and shade, so placed as to represent something they are not. If I am able to derive mental enjoyment or extract a moral lesson from the arrangement, then the painting, in so far as it touches me, is a finished thing, has

## *POINT OF VIEW*

rounded out its destiny. Does the canvas speak to me in a language that another may not understand—has it a particular message that I alone can interpret? Then it is mine. You may feel or you may affect indifference for or scoff at my understanding or my lack of understanding, but as a matter of fact you should not be concerned. If by reason of your higher developed facultes, superior acumen and more refined taste, you demand something else, go seek your soul mate in art, and leave me to contemplate my innocent source of joy. A child whose restive spirit is soothed by the strains of a lullaby craves no higher art.

No one has ever yet demonstrated that true love in the common ranks of life is less spiritual than that of the prince or nabob. The lover's world is a small one, with a population of two. He perceives beauty and excellence where another looks for them in vain—discovers qualities utterly undiscoverable by any one else. Would you rob

him of that which to you would be worthless? Must we all love the same picture merely because someone has pronounced it great? Art may be advanced through catholicity; but by dogmatism, never. The writer remembers when at school seeing a little girl of about his own age chalk up on a blackboard the picture of a log cabin, showing doorway, windows, chimney and all, with a splendid tree towering above them, and the whole surrounded by a superb fence. For the girl herself I had but slight regard; but, God bless you, I sat there wrapt in admiration of her wonderful art! To be able to perform such a feat, what would I not have given? Could insignificant I hope to attain such a height in cleverness? Now I am brought to a realization of the truth that the poetry and exquisite charm with which that sketch was invested came not from the child who drew it, but from me. The yearnings of an untutored heart found gratification in a lullaby. As

## *POINT OF VIEW*

Emerson says, we take from a picture only that which we bring to it.

You and I agree in dissenting from the views entertained by your pessimistic acquaintance regarding the future of art in this country. He is very much mistaken. I am no prophet nor the son of a prophet, but unless I am a miserably poor guesser, an era of unexampled development throughout the whole domain of art is approaching in the United States. The years to come promise grander attainments in landscape painting alone than we are capable of imagining. Candid contemporaneous painters who feel the limitations of their own strength must realize something of the boundless possibilities in this direction. The master landscape painter of the world is yet to appear. In the art centers of Europe to-day the American picture buyer is a joke; but the real joke, when its practical application is subjected to analysis, is with the earnest, plodding, struggling artist

of his native land, who, notwithstanding the serious drawback which this bestowal of the cream of the patronage in other quarters puts upon him, will ultimately set a mark so high that even those prodigies of other lands may find some difficulty in reaching it. At no distant day the keen intelligence of this people will bring them to a perception of the necessity of turning their attention to art as another step in the onward march of their own special form of civilization; and when they do, my word for it, America in art as in other respects will be abundantly able to take care of herself.

It is very agreeable indeed to be informed that you are expecting to visit this city, and will see me. Trusting your plans do not miscarry, and that I shall soon have the pleasure of meeting you in person, I will close with the suggestion that it would be advisable for you to seek me directly on your arrival.

Cordially yours, etc.

[16]

### THIRD LETTER

*Refers to the Meeting with his Correspondent by the Author, after which he Enters a Disclaimer*

MY DEAR SIR—That was a fortunate opportunity for both of us which enabled you to make the trip to Chicago; for now that we have become acquainted we shall be able to conduct our personal correspondence with less reserve. When I proposed that if you would write to me occasionally, whenever time permitted, I knew it would afford me pleasure to indite an answer, and in doing so try to jot down any little pointers which might be useful in your studies. The agreement was made in good faith, and shall be adhered to. This should involve no sense of obligation on your part, for I ask nothing beyond the stipulation that if at any time

you discover wherein your instructor has erred you will do him simple justice by remembering that he never claimed to be infallible. Moreover the writer is opposed on general principles to dogmatists of every stripe.

I dare say the impression derived from the many gems of landscape painting at the Art Institute in this city, in whose splendors we lately reveled, has not passed from your remembrance. Those examples of the great Fromentin's work, for instance, and those charming things by Corot and Daubigny. Ah, me! How fondly I dwell on the names of these old timers! In addition to the three just mentioned, there were Eugene Delacroix, Mariano Fortuny, Constant Troyan, Alphonse DeNeuville, Jules Dupre, Felix Ziem, William Bouguereau, Rosa Bonheur, Gustave Doré, Edwin Landseer, George Inness, William M. Hunt, M. F. H. DeHaas and James D. Smillie—beacon lights of my boyhood days—all of

## *POINT OF VIEW*

whom were living and painting at the period when, with the impetuosity of youth, I was struggling to rend my shackles and fly away upon unfettered pinions to the impecunious land of Arcady.

It is doubtful if a single one of the artists enumerated in the foregoing list ever allowed an excess of adulation on the part of admirers of his work to divert him from the exacting duties required by his chosen study. The painter whose renown influences an extensive circle of kindly disposed creatures to lead him, siren-like, into continuous rounds of pleasure generally pays the penalty in a pronounced loss of mental vigor, and is not long in forfeiting all pretensions to the exercise of synthetic powers. Thenceforth he is a "dead one," to be cast up sooner or later, like a confused mass of wreckage, on the barren rocks that line the shores of life's sea of endeavor. Rough and ready army men affirm that a modicum of social indulgence goes a long way toward

offsetting rigorous field tactics and weary marches. By reason of his very nature, his temperamental attributes, the artist is over-susceptible, and should therefore be on his guard. Not that he should turn recluse or embrace asceticism, for these take us to the opposite extreme; but for one who aspires to become a social ornament it surely were just as well to relinquish the pursuit of art entirely, or, still better, never to have begun it.

The pointed interrogatory which you put to me in this last letter, namely, do I consider in view of the course you have elected to pursue that the circumstance of your being married and the father of children is an unfortunate one, I must answer emphatically in the negative. If any individual stands in need of the encouragement to be derived from companionship with one or the opposite sex more particularly than another, it is he of the poetic temperament—The lights and shadows of wedded life—f

## *POINT OF VIEW*

those alternating periods of happiness and distress, of joy and gloom—incident to that most natural and only symmetrical form of existence, are the common lot, and may be observed in all lives. It is useless trying to evade them. Certainly spinsters and bachelors can not claim exemption. These resemble unfinished buildings, lamps without oil or clocks that need to be wound. Good-naturedly speaking, they may be said to be all right, as far as they go, but something is required to make them answer their original purpose. The writer has no patience with those visionaries who would constitute their imperfect state an essential stepping stone to success in any direction.

Pray dismiss your rising fears; it is not my purpose to take up the question of human ethics and enter into its discussion. Occasionally your correspondent may be caught dabbling in the shallow waters along shore, but he will never plunge into the unfathomable depths of that ocean of con-

## *THE ARTIST'S*

troversy, you may rest assured. On this trite subject much has been said and more has been written, notwithstanding which its recondite character remains undisputed. Every question has two sides, and to the best established rules there are exceptions. I can not help thinking that, despite its amazing complexity and imperfections, humanity is not unlike the umbrageous groves, the azure sea, the palpitating fields, the ever-shifting clouds in the firmament or any other of the exquisitely diversified aspects of nature. Viewed from a reverential and proper standpoint, it is grandly beautiful. Are you searching for the beautiful? "Seek and ye shall find."

Painters, poets, composers, writers of fiction—intellectual dreamers—have their places, and so have farmers, artisans and tradesmen. We did not create ourselves nor did we purchase in open market the faculties with which we are endowed. Every one must shoulder his load and carry it,

## *POINT OF VIEW*

and, knowing himself, he must determine for himself what the nature of that load shall be. Each individual possesses some share of every other individual's inherent disposition, otherwise he would, as the saying goes, form a class all by himself. We are diminutive units of the greater unit—Man. That we are all linked together and exist for one another is the conclusion of the best thinkers of to-day. May it not be possible that an indissoluble bond also unites the living with those who have passed away and with those who are yet to come? The shortsighted mortal is he who, in a spirit of overwhelming conceit, imagines he can live separately or in a manner different from his fellows. Like a leaf detached from its parent tree, he soon shrivels.

With sentiments of sincere regard, etc.

## FOURTH LETTER

*Some Hints with Reference to the Painting  
of Pictures Outdoors, Along with an  
Opinion as to Painting Them Indoors*

MY DEAR NORMANDIN—Your expressed determination to “get outdoors and do some sketching from nature this summer,” is a capital idea, and one from which it is to be hoped trifling obstacles will not be permitted to swerve you. The landscape painter, in view of the fact that his model, being unprovided with legs, can not come to him, must go to nature for his subject and inspiration. If it is your first experience, you will learn at the very outset that instead of its being a “fascinating pastime,” as some would seem to think, sketching outdoors comes nearer constituting downright drudgery, and is withal a task abounding in dis-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

couragements. The “fascination” part of it is one of those fascinating mental fictions indulged in by sentimentalists who never tried it, or, if they did, sought to excuse pronounced failure by saying they lacked “the talent.”

When brought face to face with its realities one soon discovers that this “delightful” occupation, like that of the actor’s, presents a seamy side quite imperceptible in the breezy scraps of canvas exposed to view on the walls of artist’s studios. If showers of rain never sprang up to saturate you and your materials, or if gusts of wind never blew your canvas into the middle of next week or into the ravine; if the sunlight would not glare and shift about, or if mud-holes would forget to locate themselves precisely where they interfere with your point of view; if the temperature were never too hot or too cold, but always just about right; or if gnats, flies, mosquitoes and a myriad of unfamiliar insects which make their appear-

ance only when sketching is going on, not to mention inquisitive farm pets, such as colts, heifers and muley cows, nor the predatory pig that overturns your lunch basket and runs off with a sandwich in his mouth, would all and severally keep away, and keep on keeping away, sketching "woodland and pastures green" might then become not very different from any other kind of plain, ordinary work.

Since one must, however, accept conditions as one finds them, the sketcher has nothing for it but to go ahead, like Tommy Atkins, and take his chances. It is fun, certainly, but, as Mark Twain would say, of a "mild type." When seated on a mass of driftwood in the middle of a noisy, gurgling stream, absorbed in the painting of a tumbling waterfall, suddenly to have your attention arrested by a water moccasin crawling over what he supposes to be an integral portion of the drift, but which in reality is your foot, tends to disturb that continuity of

## *POINT OF VIEW*

thought so desirable at the moment; but it is nothing at all, once you have passed through the rather trying ordeal of becoming accustomed to such things.

Again, a reckless pot-hunter, the terrific detonations of whose shotgun are all out of proportion to the diminutive songsters he is pursuing, not infrequently helps to break that same continuity. If it is merely the birds which receive loads of shot in their sides, there is slight occasion for anxiety on your part, wherefore you may leisurely proceed with your work. A brave man will not encourage the disquieting reflection that the next load may strike him. Don't be frightened because the leaden pellets are snipping off leaves and twigs in close proximity. Think of what soldiers have to face!

Then there is the inquisitive yokel who pauses to fire a volley of questions at you, and passes on, to be succeeded in about five minutes by another with an entirely differ-

ent set of imbecile interrogatories. To give anything like a complete list of these, by reason of the ingenuity displayed in the invention of new ones, would be impossible, but a few of the commonest are indelibly stamped on my memory, for instance: "What do you do with these pictures when you get them done?" "How much money will a picture like that bring?" "What is that you are painting on—a board?" "How long does it take you to paint a picture?" "Comes sort o' natural to you, I 'spose?" "What kind of paints are them?" "How do you know what colors to use?" "Is it healthy work?" "Do you like to paint?" "How long did it take you to learn?" "Is it hard on the eyes?" "Do you mind my watchin' you?"

Another trifling matter I had almost forgotten to mention is the extraordinary ease with which newly painted canvases may be conveyed from one point to another. In this connection something could be said

about white elephants; but the simile might appear hackneyed.

Instead of dissuading you, these cheerful reminders are merely intended to illustrate the adventurous character of the undertaking, and thus help to spur you on. Observe that you get not only sketches, but good, wholesome excitement in the bargain. However, some of the drawbacks included in the foregoing schedule, like the old man's troubles, may "never happen," and usually there is some way of partially circumventing those which do happen.

Having chosen a subject, begin working, but not with pencil or brush. Within the prescribed range of the sketch measure systematically and compare spaces and distances with your eye, and by holding a pencil at arm's length. While you are not bound to follow these measurements blindly, be very careful to see that you lose none of their beauty or truthfulness. Decide what, if anything, is to be left out entirely. Now,

then, still leaving your brushes and pigments untouched, meditate on the proposed manner of treatment. Having decided what you are to paint, consider how you will paint it. Beware of extremely high and extremely low notes. The sweetest music springs from the middle of the keyboard. Continue thinking, and think hard, previous to laying on the first stroke, for, after all, the picture is to be no more and no less than your thought. Do not try to do what the camera does, but endeavor to accomplish that which is entirely above and beyond its province.

That "warmth is life and cold is death," is an aphorism no more truthful than that flexibility suggests the one and rigidity the other. Hard, stiff lines in conjunction with an excess of cold colors will positively kill a good drawing and obscure an otherwise excellent composition. A cast iron stove is less rigid than the being through whose arteries the current of life has ceased to flow.

Rigidity is the equivalent of death. While avoiding perfectly straight lines as much as possible, see that you do not overload your picture or get tangled up with too many crooked ones. Gentle curves combined with pronounced ones is an agreeable arrangement, but an abrupt twist is faulty in the extreme. Presenting a clumsy curve where a flowing line should have appeared offends the eye. Waving lines give life to a composition. How perfectly this is exemplified in our national emblem. In design it is one of the plainest of banners; but fling it to the breeze, and, presto! It is the most beautiful flag in the world. When introducing architectural effects, some straight lines necessarily will appear, and are pleasing by way of contrast, but in these avoid hardness as well as too much distinctness.

Bearing in mind that which already has been stated, namely, that warmth is life, do not hesitate to employ somewhat recklessly

the glowing hues of orange, modified green, yellow, russet and red; but when using the intense shades of green, blue and purple, exercise great caution, and, like the motorman who approaches a dangerous curve, go slow. Just for the sake of comparison, observe the effect of a minute portion of blue mingled with a much greater quantity of pure white pigment. It "tells" instantly. Reversing the process, mix a modicum of white with a quantity of pure blue pigment, and the effect is scarcely discernible. Modifying warm colors by adding cold ones is an easy matter, but in reversing the order it is much more difficult. It may be as well to add, warm colors are more plastic than the cool ones. In the process of modeling, blue, by reason of its cooling quality, is used for shadows; and in this department its free use, along with red and yellow, is demanded. Each of the three primary colors possesses separate and distinctly useful properties. Red warms, blue cools, and yellow softens

everything. The warm colors impart life and luminosity, while the cold ones tend to opacity. Very light tints of the cold colors, however, are as luminous as the warm ones. Because it serves to regulate the tone of a painting, blue possesses a power peculiarly its own.

Some able teachers of drawing maintain that color in art is a non-essential—that you should learn to draw, and let the color question take care of itself. While this in a sense is good advice, because the study of color should never precede that of drawing, yet the writer is not prepared to admit the truthfulness of the dictum. Pictures painted by different artists vary greatly in respect of tonal strength. Closely studying the relationship of colors and noting their effects, one is enabled to paint his picture with color, while in nowise slighting his drawing. Strong drawings in black and white, with the color thrown in promiscuously are sometimes very beautiful, but they

lose when opposed to equally well-drawn pictures painted by accomplished colorists.

Color in painting occupies a position somewhat analogous to that of euphony in rhetoric; and while writing does not depend on the latter, good literature demands it. While pictures do not rely on the former, high art requires its recognition. Paintings which show clever draughtsmanship, and at the same time a lack of knowledge as to color, would better have been done entirely in monochrome.

For the landscape painter nothing can supersede the study of nature by means of outdoor sketching after he has completed a scholastic course in drawing. If you would acquire an indispensable knowledge of construction, values and atmospheric phenomena, adhere to the practice during your whole lifetime. The noted artist who said that "nature is seldom artistic," concisely and truthfully expressed an idea, paradoxical as it would seem. What he meant to

## *POINT OF VIEW*

say was, that the most charming features of the landscape, instead of composing themselves into square-shaped sections to fit canvas stretchers, will persist in spreading over vast areas. Another painter who supplemented the assertion by declaring that "she never is," went beyond the mark. Beautiful artistic effects now and then appear in nature, but—and here is the painter's despair—they are fleeting, a few moments sufficing to dissipate them, and they are gone forever. Who has not beheld those exquisite sunsets above old ocean's billows, when the tossing waves give back countless prismatic fragments of color; or sat for hours in contemplation of the full-orbed moon swinging high above the sombrous trees and church spires, now sinking behind the clouds—fringing them incomparably—and emerging in such bursts of light as to make one almost hold his breath in awe! Who has not risen with the lark and gone forth to gaze in raptures upon the splendors of

morning, when scattering iridescent vapors recalled to mind the noble Montague's exclamation, "Look, love, what envious streaks do lace the severing clouds in yonder east!"

Make careful studies of trees, fields, decrepit fences, cabins, swift-running streams, placid lakes, haystacks, archways—in fact, everything you find possessing interest and which is sure to be useful. Study how the farmer constructs a corn shock and how nature constructs a cascade. Get after the underlying principles of construction. Obtain all kinds of sketches and keep them, if to serve no other purpose than as indices to mark your progress from time to time. When you desire to paint a real picture, however—one to which you will be proud to sign your name—do as all of the best artists do: procure from nature a truthful, pleasing motive, set up a canvas in your studio and paint it. Paint it so that it will have the appearance of having been done outdoors at a certain season of the year and

## *POINT OF VIEW*

a definite time of day. Give it grace, light, warmth, atmosphere. These are the things for which modern masters are striving. The assertion that this or that picture was "painted outdoors," has an agreeable sound, but it is another of those conventional fictions to which our attention is continually being called. The work being good, what difference can it make whether it was done indoors or outdoors, on top of Mount Washington or in the depths of a cavern? When questioned as to where he procured such and such a scene, an artist would be a calloused brute who refused to gratify his interlocutor's curiosity. The flat statement that it was done outdoors might be amplified by additional details, as, for example: "Yes, sir, I made that sketch on the 11th of last January, in a high gale, with my easel tied to a red oak stump directly behind Judge Gordon's barn, one mile north of Fairview, on Brandywine creek, Pennsylvania; and my excuse for blurring the figure of the man

over there by the fence is that he moved just as I was painting him."

Whenever this stereotyped query is put to your humble servant, involuntarily he feels like replying, "Is n't the picture itself satisfying enough without the accompaniment of specifications and statistics?" When a neighbor asks the peddler passing through the alley if his potatoes are good, does he answer, "No, ma'am, they are very poor?" Similarly, if you must buttonhole the doctor as he is taking his leave, to inquire about the patient's chances, naturally enough he gives you one of his most soothing stock replies; just as the conscientious lawyer, when pinned down, will candidly admit at the outset that yours is a remarkably strong case. Moral: if you want humbug, ask for it.

Go to nature for your motive, and having found it, then and there if possible lay it in as truthfully as your knowledge will permit, and in so doing gain valuable assistance. Nature is original and a splendid auxiliary.

## *POINT OF VIEW*

No one can ever hope to imagine what she will do, for she abounds in surprises; but as sure as fish swim you will complete the picture in your studio, because the best painters all do that. Do not understand me as saying good pictures are never painted in the open. It has been done; but I contend that it is not the rule. Some of the most atrocious sketches ever perpetrated were done "right outdoors." Permit nobody's talk about "painting right outdoors" to mislead or befuddle you. The exquisite manipulation and rare intonation displayed in the works of Corot and Inness do not look as if they had been done anywhere outside of a well-lighted, comfortable studio. When DeNeuville saw an exciting combat in progress, did he request the gentlemanly participants to stop fighting for a few weeks and "stand right there" while he depicted the scene on canvas? Why, your correspondent has seen a marine painter in his studio evolve from his inner consciousness the

foamiest of waves being dashed to spray against the hardest kind of rocks in a sketch that was realistic enough to induce a wager that it was made outdoors on the coast of Maine. How could he do that? Through having studied closely wave action and coast construction for years. To assert that an artist can not draw an object unless it is in front of him would be no less inconsistent than to say that a litterateur can describe only that which is directly before his eyes. In closing, I can not do better than to quote a good thing from Mr. Bruce Crane, who said, "The object of studying and sketching out-of-doors is to fill the memory with facts. It should therefore be exact and conscientious."

With best wishes I remain, etc.

## FIFTH LETTER

*An Assortment of Dry Details Relative to Composition, Contour, Color, Contrast, Texture, etc., which the Reader is Invited to Regard as Facts*

FRIEND NORMANDIN—While writing my last letter to you an annoying interruption prevented me from finishing what I wished to say concerning preliminary studies and outdoor sketching. Having taken up the “receiver” to indulge in social chat along this line, and being not much different from party-line bores in general, I find it difficult to “ring off”; which is not particularly astonishing, when we come to consider that the theme comprehends almost the whole science of painting. In first attempts at this work one needs to summon to his aid all that he knows and all that anyone else

can tell him, and yet be forced to sigh beneath the weight of his troubles.

Since it is the real foundation of a picture, the composition demands your first care. Give this careful, leisurely thought. When you think you have the composition about right, and are impelled by a feeling of impatience to get started, stop and think again. If properly balanced and its proportions are correct, well and good, you may proceed to lay in the picture; but if it is wrong, you will find yourself all wrong, and many hours of subsequent laborious effort will be required to get you righted. In the arrangement and disposition of the lines and masses exercise the most careful judgment. Some one has said that if only ten days' time were available for the painting of a picture, six of those should be devoted to the ground-work upon which it is proposed to build.

Whether a composition is a good or a bad one depends upon the length, direction and character of its principal lines. An other-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

wise good painting may be ruined by one jarring line. Knit the masses together by permitting objects to overlap each other. Do not segregate the principal masses, but have them joined together by some means. Above all things study to avoid mechanical arrangement in the distribution of objects; let the separations bear something of the ratio that two is to three. Move things about to suit your projected picture. Should it appear desirable to have the haystack which is behind you form a portion of the sketch, turn around and draw it in. If the mechanical construction of the fence is too straight for artistic purposes, give it a pleasing curve. Preserve the spirit of the scene—lose nothing of its general truthfulness—but do not permit disfiguring or useless facts to hamper you. The bread being good, one doesn't have to bother his head about how it was baked. This is to be your picture—take liberties with it; only, keep within the bounds of reason and give free play to your

inventive faculties and natural good taste. Whatever you do, do not take too seriously my remarks on the subject of composition, because books have been written along this line which will enlighten you even less than I have done.

Another feature to which your earnest attention should be directed is that of contours. A truthfully drawn outline is the very essence of the object itself, and the addition of but a few detail touches often will suffice to complete its artistic similitude. Silhouette in some quarters is regarded as the strongest phase of portraiture. Flaxman demonstrated the power of outlines. A fine outline drawing is the acme of artistic craftiness and skill. Get away from the photographic idea—as far away as possible. The old masters never saw a photograph, and perhaps that is one of the reasons why they painted so well. Photography bears about the same relationship to the painter's art as “canned music” sustains to symphony.

## *POINT OF VIEW*

Think a moment—is not mechanism the antithesis of art?

The prevailing sky color should be the key to your sketch. Hold the tone. Beneath a cool sky the landscape will be cooler than it would be were the clouds aglow with red and orange. When the sky is illuminated with red, orange and yellow, as it frequently is at sunset, modify the cold greens and blues in the landscape until they accord with the prevailing tone of the sketch, by which is meant, do not paint them as cold as they appear to the eye. Where depth of shadow appears underneath an object, like that of a spreading tree, paint it, as the saying goes, "good and strong." This illuminates the color above it and serves to give distinction and force to the work.

Pure yellow, red, blue, orange, green and purple have no place, as such, in a sketch from nature. Their effect is always cheap and tawdry. What is known in technical phraseology as brilliant coloring, does not

signify crude coloring. Once upon a time when yours truly was younger than he is now, and the world itself bore a decidedly roseate complexion, he painted a foreground of such a sanguinary hue that someone was led to inquire if that was where "they killed the calf." In the portrayal of an object brightly colored introduce a quantity of the local color's complementary sufficient to take away its character of rawness. Thus it is that all nature is modified by the atmospheric medium; and the quality of atmosphere in a painting is obtained precisely in proportion to the degree to which this subjection of the primary and secondary colors is intelligently carried.

The law of contrasts, referring not alone to colors, but to contrast in all things, presents a wide field of study and is a citadel of resourcefulness to the painter. Notwithstanding its important bearing on every feature of a picture — length, breadth, outline, color, size, density, texture, action and

what not—the law of contrasts is to no appreciable extent a subject available for didactic discussion. No rules for guidance which would be worth considering can be imparted. The arrangement of the principal contrasting masses having been decided on, opportunities for the introduction of a series of graduated minor effects of contrast present themselves, affording illimitable scope for the exercise of skill and correct judgment.

Sketching (or drawing, which is substantially the same thing) is more of a mental than a manual performance, the latter being entirely subordinate to the former function. There, we will say by way of illustration, is an object, and here in front of me is a canvas stretcher or a sheet of white paper—very blank, and as absolutely meaningless as a politician's pre-election promises. Now, literally speaking, I am quite unequal to the task of depicting on that canvas or paper the object presented to my view pre-

cisely as it is. This can not be done. Even the most accurate of photographs shows an element of distortion. The object being a visible thought is chosen by me for a purpose. Only by way of or by passing through the ramifications of my individual understanding can its semblance be transferred to the dead, soulless surface confronting me. I proceed to draw an outline of the object, and behold!—that surface is no longer the inane thing upon which we have just been gazing. Something has made its appearance there—something for the eye to rest upon—a substantiality—and, wonderful to say, that something was a part of me, to the extent that it came directly from me and from nowhere else. Certainly it was no portion of the object, since that remains unmoved, precisely as it was before. My mind, however, having formulated a thought, must to some extent have been disturbed.

It follows that no two persons will ever

## *POINT OF VIEW*

draw the same object alike. Merely holding a pencil and trying to make it do something is a precarious method of acquiring knowledge. Through careful observation and comparison earnest students learn almost as much about drawing without the crayon as they do with it. The mind being first informed as to the contour and other characteristics of the model, and the piece of crayon acting in the capacity of a vehicle for conveying those impressions to the paper, the former may be trained to do its work nearly as well at the expiration of a stipulated number of hours as within a few moments after the mental impression has been received.

Colors in the sky differ from terrestrial tones, in that they are uniformly of a much lighter quality. Even remote bodies beneath the horizon present an appearance of solidity not appertaining to those above. The writer is aware that the repetition of such obvious truths must seem absurd; but

from personal observation it has been impressed on me that as long as railway tracks, despite all warnings, continue to reap their harvest of victims, because deaf persons will persist in going out of their way to walk upon them; and as long as supposedly strong-minded individuals are daily committing indiscretions and falling by the wayside—"to err is human"—and this must constitute my apology for an excess of solicitude. It would perhaps be just as well at first not to attempt grand or brilliant sky effects. Striving to depict the interminable scale of changes in the heavens, ranging from perfect tranquillity to the most amazing exhibitions of exaggerated turbulence, will, when essayed separately, afford you enough to do without trying to study these and the landscape simultaneously. In sketching paint the sky rather simple and quiet, but avoid smooth, flat, meaningless coats of paint. Study the sky itself, and forget the painted skies you have seen. Its color value

## *POINT OF VIEW*

may be determined by comparing the relative strength of tall objects in juxtaposition.

Never leave patches of nothing—that is to say, nothing but paint—anywhere in your sketch. Even a smooth meadow or field of grain possesses texture—shows something more than a layer of dull pigment. And just here permit me to enjoin on you the importance of getting the texture of whatever object you undertake to paint. The greater your success in overcoming the difficulties in this department, the more ability you will display and the higher degree of respect you will command as an artist. To permit some portion of the texture of the distant hills to appear detached and floating in the sky is permissible in the portrayal of very high mountains, and nowhere else that I can recall; but a vagrant slice of the firmament meandering across a meadow in the guise of water is inexcusable, because the texture of the sky differs from that of water even if the colors shown in the latter are but

reflections of those belonging to the former. Only by lowering the key can an object be reflected. It is by means of texture that artists remove from objects in their pictures that "painty" appearance; for when the one appears, the other is gone. Directly you get the texture of a bird's feathers, the vapid, bird-shaped contour, which previously was nothing more than a lump of paint, takes on the appearance of a real bird. The quality of a Turkish rug is that of thickness and weight, whereas that of a silk ribbon is thinness and lightness. Truthfulness of texture demonstrates which is which. A noted cartoonist, in a burst of confidence, once told me that all attempts on his part to paint pictures in water colors resulted in failure—"because," said he, "when I tried to paint feathers they looked like stones, and when I tried to paint stones they looked like feathers!" Should you wish a more comprehensive lecture on this subject?

Where distance appears in a sketch it should be rendered attractive by the introduction of deft, suggestive touches, full of meaning. The last part of this sentence applies equally to every portion of a painting, more particularly with reference to its focal area, either near or distant. Every inch of one's canvas, if one happens to possess sufficient capability, should be full of meaning. An excellent test for a completed landscape is to divide it by imaginary transverse lines into four quarters and regard the sections separately. If the painting is to be rated as an all-around good one, each of the quarters will exhibit in some degree all of the qualities belonging to a single picture—that is to say, each will have its highest point of light and its region of deepest shadow, its warm and cool tones properly balanced, its foreground and distance, etc. Obviously, if one of these sections does not still remain the climax of your picture, the next thing in

order will be to scrape the canvas clean, or permit the surface to become thoroughly hardened, and begin all over again.

With kind regards and trusting, etc.

## SIXTH LETTER

*Offers a Few Additional Remarks on Sketching, and Closes with Some Reflections on Art and its Attendant Croakers.*

MY DEAR FRIEND—Your recent communication, bubbling over with good cheer and hopefulness, serving to dispel a threatened attack of ennui, has put your humble servant in a pretty good humor this evening, and consequently there is no knowing, now that he has begun writing his answer, where he will stop.

In the first place it may be advisable to remind you, while the thought is uppermost, that when sketching outdoors you must not overlook the density of atmosphere. There is something very deceptive about viewing nature through this medium, presumably

because our organs of vision are so easily misled by the appearance of objects with which they have grown familiar in the open. Though invisible near at hand, the atmosphere produces an increasing visible effect upon all objects it envelops, proportionate to their distance, with a certainty that can not be ignored in landscape work. Take, for example, a field of yellow blossoms situated some distance off: as compared with the less glaring hues near at hand, they will appear to your eye to be warmer in color. This, like the error of the tipsy father who mistook his newly-arrived baby for twins, is an illusion. Objects in perspective become more and more modified in color as they recede, and the tones they assume are, for the sake of convenience, termed gray. In the middle distance they exhibit to some extent their local coloring along with quasi-subdued contrasts; but in the foreground everything is more contrasted and stronger both in color and drawing. This is not only

## *POINT OF VIEW*

theoretically but actually true. In the practical application of the irrefragable principle here laid down, employ all the facility of your art. Therefore instead of putting on some blue paint saturated with white for distance, clots of unnatural red interspersed with crude yellow for foreground, and aimless combinations of the three for middle distance, as tyros do, exercise all possible delicacy and ingenuity in the commingling of hues and shades of color, to the end that the truth though hidden really is there and the atmosphere appears to be. The result when this charming feature of technique in landscape painting is properly done, and the relative values preserved, is always interesting and satisfying, because that is one of nature's ways of adding beauty to her creations.

With reference to objects in the foreground, do not be afraid of drawing them in too large. It is easy enough to go to the other extreme. Keep constantly in mind

throughout the entire composition this idea of bigness in all things, but particularly in the foreground. Chalk up on the tablet of your memory in large letters the word "Colossal," and keep it there as a reminder. Whenever you find yourself inclining to "tinkiness" in drawing, recall that word; then erase all you have done and draw it in about twice as large as it was before. Work your strongest colors, along with the cooler half tones, into the nearest portion of the foreground, but, as previously remarked, do not allow it to appear that you have done so. The concealment of your handling here is one of the cleverest things you can do. Slight not the foreground, for upon that depends the success of your picture.

To the beginner the natural landscape is such a bewildering problem that he hardly knows where to start painting it. Usually that which he sees is either too good or not good enough for a sketch. However, the difficulties disappear—vanish like one's

## *POINT OF VIEW*

breath on a polished surface—as soon as one begins working. Just at this point is where your mettle is put to the test. The hardest thing of all is the getting started—but start you must, if you would accomplish anything. As an artist, it is entirely within your province to create pictures, not to wait for them to appear ready made. The statue of a beautiful woman is within the block of marble; it is merely required that someone shall chip the stone away and leave it standing there revealed to the world's admiring gaze!

Avoid broadside views of buildings or other architectural effects. Choose a position, if not impossible, where their leading lines will appear in perspective. Do not trust your eye to gauge the foreshortened elevations, but apply the simple rule hereinbefore given for measuring their dimensions. They will be found to be astonishingly small in comparison with the plane surfaces. Experience will teach you

always to mistrust your eyesight with reference to what you think you see. Later on you will be enabled to perceive the tones of color in the sky faintly reflected on all upturned surfaces, on the flat fields, the foliage of trees and roofs of houses. You will learn to see purplish or lilac tones in shadows, and come to know that the colors in nature possess a peculiar quality of tenderness and strength, of softness combined with ruggedness, which, without experience, sound judgment and a mixture of the three primary colors in nearly equal though varying proportions, it is impossible to portray. Observe closely the manifold moods of nature; they are more interesting than any single scene can possibly be. Whenever you find a subject in the woods or fields or by the shore that seems worth preserving, endeavor to make your outline tell the story of its form, and let your colors describe its mood.

I am rather pleased to note your request

## *POINT OF VIEW*

to be informed as to "What is art?" because it affords me such an admirable opportunity of frankly confessing to you that I don't know. However, I can say that your asking the question occasions no surprise, since nearly all young painters do the same thing before experience has taught them that it is unanswerable. Generally or facetiously speaking, the real patented article of art is "my school of painting," or "what I like," or "whatever appeals to me." The bumptiousness thus displayed is of a piece with that which prompts an individual to bewail the lot of the rest of mankind, because they do not dwell in his town nor live as he lives. Have you never considered this aspect of universal egotism in all classes? Each and every one of us is prone to imagine that everyone else in the world would, if he were not so stubbornly pigheaded, live and do precisely as he himself lives and does. Humble folks pity the great and great folks commiserate the

humble, for the reason that each of them down in his heart thinks the other's whole mode of life a fatal mistake. With what self-satisfied complacency does your agriculturist, while evincing perfect contentment with his bucolic environment, dilate on the many disagreeable phases of town life, at the identical moment that Mr. Stone and his brother-in-law, Mortar, are wondering over their cigars at dessert why the misguided farmer, whose life at best is a sad one, will persist in sending the choicest of his products to the city.

When the question of "What is art?" has been satisfactorily disposed of, simultaneously we may expect the arrival of the faultless picture, the immaculate piece of sculpture, the flawless poem—the millennium! Someone has asserted that "art, primarily, is the spirit creative," which might lead to the conclusion that if a fellow gets drunk and creates trouble he is an artist. George Inness, a truly wonderful landscape

painter, said that "art is the endeavor on the part of mind to express, through the senses, ideas of the great principles of unity." Had that gifted man painted his pictures no better than he defined this question, it is to be feared his portrait in the gallery of fame would have to be turned to the wall.

Friends of the cause must sincerely regret that a vast amount of humbuggery and general tomfoolery is in one way and another associated with the word Art; to what extent none but their staunch patrons and the artists themselves have any idea. Responsibility for this rests largely with a very knowing and exceedingly important class of persons who, in the first place, are able to inform us precisely what Art is, and, secondly, who would just as soon, if it is agreeable, have you to understand that they enjoy a proprietary ownership and monopoly of the world's supply of æsthetic perceptions. A highly presumptuous set, these

are, who amuse by their way of passing judgment on matters about which their knowledge is extremely circumscribed. They are not patrons of art, as a rule, preferring to take it all out in talk. In truth, I believe that next to religion the love of that which is beautiful in nature and art is one of man's deepest and truest emotions; but unfortunately, not unlike religion, it is a convenient peg whereon pretenders are privileged to hang their cloaks of cheese cloth.

The individuals to whom allusion is made verify Pope's observation concerning the hazardous nature of "a little learning." After a brief term of study in a school of drawing, they have toyed with brushes and pigments and picked up as much as their heads would hold of the lingo, and precious little of anything else. With a magazine of familiar verbal weapons, such as "good stuff," "clever bit," "stunning," "nifty," or "punk," "fall down," "rotten," etc., they am-

ble about from gallery to gallery, from shop to shop, continually on the lookout for targets at which to fire their diminutive pistols. When it comes to registering the ups and downs of art students in their community they are nothing short of regular thermometers. Mr. Terry Alba, let us assume, places on exhibition an especially happy effort, which at once becomes the recipient of press eulogies. These our "thermometers" eagerly devour; and as the seeing of the new picture is a matter of life and death with them, they rush off to inspect it at the earliest moment. While scanning the fortunate gentleman's strong canvas with critical eyes, mentally they are trying to recall the newspaper terms descriptive of its merits for the benefit of bystanders. Months afterward the same talented painter shows another picture which, alas! is not quite so felicitous as the former one. This is their cue. Instantly the "thermometers" indicate approaching frost. The town is informed

that it is too bad about Alba—he has had a “fall down,” he is “going backwards” or he is “standing still.” How very human! Always ready to advance somebody standing in no need of assistance, they are the first to turn the chemical hose on him when he does. That no one is obliged, however, to have serious regard for anything these people say, is a “pleasing bit” of consolation.

How instinctively and unerringly does your working painterman distinguish between real and affected admirers of pictures. This he does with the ready perception of a storekeeper who knows by his manner of entering the shop whether the stranger is a possible purchaser or is actuated by motives of idle curiosity. Real and pretended picture lovers wear quite dissimilar expressions on their countenances when being shown paintings. The first named constitute a limited though earnest class of straightforward, cul-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

tured persons in every community, who rely upon their innate taste and fine sense of discrimination in deciding whether a picture is good or likable. But what is to be said of those who permit other people to choose their pictures for them, or seek enlightenment from newspapers as to what paintings they shall purchase for their homes? It must be confessed that there exist such non-entities among art patrons. A well-known newspaper critic well asks, "What are all the art study classes for and what are art lectures for, if not to educate people to a sense of independence in the judgment of artistic creations. Fancy a woman relying implicitly upon the taste of anyone else in the selection of her clothes." I fully agree with the same writer in saying that "the pictures in a home should reflect the individuality of its inmates." Believe me, I would almost as soon think of allowing another person to choose a wife for me, or

say what food I am to eat, as to take from me the privilege of selecting my pictures.

With sincere regards and well wishes, I remain, etc.

## SEVENTH LETTER

*Consists of Digressions and a Miscellaneous Assortment of Views*

MY DEAR FRIEND—Another letter from you, and a welcome one as usual. The several questions therein propounded having been given careful consideration shall be answered to the best of my ability. Yes, you are doing exactly right in this. I relish the spirit that prompts you to interrogate me freely; although if now and then your tutor finds himself “up a stump”—treed, as it were—perhaps the easiest and quickest way out of the dilemma will be for him to “come down” with an acknowledgment of his ignorance.

In reading your communication I came upon a slightly dissonant expression, giving the faintest suggestion of a feeling of pique

over praise bestowed by somebody on another's pictures, which has engendered in me an apprehension not entirely agreeable. I shall endeavor to put this at rest on the instant by unburdening my mind of a thought befitting the occasion. Speaking bluntly, I would have you, my friend, begin training yourself now to never, never, under any circumstances, allow such a thing as even the shadow of envy in regard to a fellow painter's success find lodgment in your breast. Whenever it knocks at the door, promptly send down word that you are "not at home." I should wish to live long enough to see the acute disorder known as "professional jealousy," which acts in restraint of good feeling among members of certain other callings, completely eliminated from that of the painter's. It is inexcusable. If such weaknesses belong anywhere at all it is to the lower orders of mankind. As well expect to find one evangelist cherishing toward another resent-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

ment because the latter's good fortune enabled him to save a greater number of souls. Disciples of art, it strikes me, should be not very different from ministers of the meek and lowly Teacher. Are they not the exponents of that which should be as completely exempt as mother love or reverence for Deity from the withering influence of petty passions? Like the student of chemistry or higher mathematics, an artist's investigations, leading him as they do to observe at close range the wonders of creation, must constitute a succession of revelations ultimately guiding his mind to a contemplation of the Infinite. Imagine an art student devoid of sentiment and uncontrolled by depth of feeling and earnestness! As an anomalous spectacle he might arouse curiosity, but never could he hope to engage the attention of art lovers in his creations.

You ask if continuous application to your studies is likely to be beneficial. It might

prove to be the reverse. As a means of helping one to grasp and hold the knowledge required to paint well, a very good plan is to divert the mind occasionally by more or less concentrated effort in other and contrary directions. No benefit can accrue to one who permits an absorbing pursuit to usurp his thoughts until they become timid about venturing beyond the narrow confines of a single idea. It is not advisable to "think shop" all the time. Music and poetry are stimulative, but I would suggest as being equally good, perhaps better, the study of electricity, chemistry, literature, law, medicine, etc. For in transacting business with one's own brains, one ought not to be parsimonious, for if they are supplied with an abundance of substantial food, obviously they must grow and expand. If an artist's advancement can be in any way retarded or interfered with by reason of his breadth of intellect, then I have nothing more to add.

Changing the subject again: the trouble I find with the "commercial" artist as distinguished from the other kind (if there be another kind), is to determine where the one begins and the other ends. The phrase, like that of "a wealthy man," appears to be entirely relative. So long as painters of pictures have to depend on material sustenance in order to exist, and so long as their productions are bought and sold, it would seem that every man of us and every phase of artistic life is more or less "commercial." Among students in schools of art there is nearly always to be found an exceedingly choice coterie of persons with a fixed habit of rolling their eyes heavenward while deprecating "commercial" artists. As individuals they are "real nice" and harmless as fledgling doves, but their undisciplined spirits can scarcely endure the bare mention of any one whose pictures sell. In passing, let us suppose the case of an artist of superior talent and opportunities who

paints pictures and sells them to those who admire and are able to buy them at high prices, while another with less talent and more restricted resources paints pictures and disposes of them to persons of less means at lower prices. Is there any appreciable difference between the two? Decidedly, yes. According to the gospel of cadism one is a real artist, the other a "commercial" artist. Pshaw! All painters sell their work, and if they do not, it is because no one wants it. The matter resolves itself into another aspect of the mediæval doctrine, that the good things of life shall go to the strong, which is a mistake, for the simple reason that God, in His infinite wisdom, ordained that it shall be otherwise.

Speaking of strong people reminds me of something not exactly humorous, nor precisely pathetic, but rather of a serio-comic nature. Probably you have observed that sturdy married couples not always are blessed with offspring who partake of their

## *POINT OF VIEW*

parents' forceful characteristics. It so happens now and then, unfortunately, that one of the children in such a family develops a disposition which, to say the least, is a poser. Granted it is a boy who will not work and is disinclined to study, but shows a strong predilection for lounging around and thumping on a piano or drawing grotesque pictures. His fond parents, swathed in vestments of pride and bearing aloft the banner of hope, arrive at the conclusion that, inasmuch as he is so utterly worthless in every other direction, he must be a born genius. Somewhere they have read that great geniuses all are thus inclined. Ah!—a happy thought, and one that affords a most satisfactory explanation of the reason why the youngster's proclivities are so notoriously different from those of his brothers and sisters. "All's well that ends well." Their prayers for a genius in the family are answered. He has arrived!

Should it develop that the callow gentle-

man's capacious intellect inclines to comics in chalk more than to his favorite diversions with popular airs in ragtime on the piano, the question is put to him in all seriousness whether he would not like to be an artist. As a matter of course he replies "Yes." Had his answer been in the negative, the doting parents would need to have gone no farther than their garden patch to find cocoanuts growing luxuriantly on common gooseberry bushes. Young hopeful accordingly is hustled off to a school of drawing, where he hammers away somewhat perfunctorily until, later on, he is sent abroad for a term of years to "finish his studies." In Paris, where he has an uproariously good time, he squanders a small fortune, acquires a taste for port wine, puts a crimp in his health, and finally returns home after he has learned to paint "clever things." These, to be sure, are suspiciously like someone else's pictures we have seen before, but

being undeniably "good," they are accepted as convincing proof of their author's talent. The collection of pictures he brings back with him goes on exhibition, is given favorable press notices, and the public pats him on the back. Intoxication of success! How we apples swim! Two of his canvases immediately are sold for round prices—one of them to a shrewd, high-salaried individual who is courting his sister, the other to a rich uncle. Thereupon our budding artist takes a studio, furnishes it charmingly, and occasionally paints a picture, but meets with slight encouragement. Somehow American landscapes will not lend themselves to artistic treatment—a serious fault, from which they may be freed in time. He misses something—can it be the fineness or the remarkable transcendence of European scenery? The public "over here" exhibiting a lack of appreciation of art, he tires finally of the thankless pursuit, disposes of

the costly draperies, bric-a-brac and armorial decorations, relinquishes his studio and seeks renown in other fields.

Every river in the world, conchologists tell us, produces its own distinct variety of shell; and similarly it would appear that nearly every calling develops its concomitant bores—social curiosities whose mental vagaries arouse variable emotions. In the springtime of his career there comes to the artist a particularly hateful, patronizing biped, upon whom appropriately might be conferred the title of “Stinger.” It is pretty safe to venture the assertion, my dear sir, that before now you have encountered a member of that irritating guild whose sole aim is to disparage you and cast wet cloths on your ambition by means of invidious comparisons. We will assume that during your leisure hours you have tried your hand at painting a number of small pictures, without a thought of giving offense to any mortal. Thereupon you are

## *POINT OF VIEW*

accused of being an artist, in answer to which serious charge you hurl back "Not guilty." But somehow the report is spread abroad and you are in for it. Unctuously professing partiality for and everything akin to art, comes now that paragon of pomposity, Mr. Nettle, with a suave request to be shown those tentative efforts of yours, which you are pleased to grant to one in whom you think you recognize a kindred spirit.

Bestowing on them a glance of contemptuous indifference, immediately he is reminded of an obscure cousin of his, located somewhere back in the woods, who paints pictures "just like these." Then, dropping into narrative, he proceeds to recount the wonderful feats of an artist he once knew—much younger than yourself, a mere boy—who did marvelous things; carried off more honors in the way of badges, medals, diplomas, first premiums, etc., than you could hope to win in two lifetimes; painted

with lightning-like rapidity the most difficult subjects; and obtained for the smallest of his canvases fabulous sums of money. If it is one of your unlucky days, this pestiferous man may take it into his head to regale you with some casual mention of another man who was, Oh, such a marvel of precocity, a genius of the "purest ray serene"! This one, when sober, could not paint marbles, but fill him up with whisky, get him good and drunk, and then watch his body swaying back and forth in front of the easel, keeping rhythmic time to the measured movements of an enchanted brush, as he turns out picture after picture, in numbers beyond computation, both daring in conception and sparkling all over with originality. Of course he is dead now, but—with a sigh of regret—it was simply amazing what that fellow could do when he was living and in his cups.

The logical inference to be drawn from these covert thrusts is, that you are getting

## *POINT OF VIEW*

on in years, and would better be nimble if you hope ever to accomplish anything; that you are very slow, entirely unknown and far from being clever; that your pictures are ordinary, cheap affairs, and if you expect to be rated as a real genius and go up high you must acquire the drink habit. Common courtesy forbids a reply to speeches of this nature, just as common courtesy forbids their being made; but you are at liberty to form your private opinion of the speaker, whilst mentally quoting Betsy Prig's memorable and tremendous words, "I don't believe there's no sich person."

With renewed assurances of esteem, I remain, etc.

## EIGHTH LETTER

*Some Remarks on Technical Education and  
a Few Words About Dealers in Pictures,  
Together with an Explanation  
of Values.*

DEAR FRIEND—As no reply to my last communication has been received, it is to be inferred that your children are still battling with scarlet fever, and that you are not free from anxiety. Therefore, in pursuance of a settled conviction, namely, that it is easier to read a letter than to write one, I shall presume to address you again.

Renewing the line of thought with which my former note was brought to a close, you should be told that the genus "stinger" therein referred to (representatives of which are to be met with only at intervals) does not constitute the sole impediment to youthful

enthusiasm. You must, as you go along, take cognizance of a far more numerous section of society, composed of intelligent persons, who at all times evince polite though marked apathy with reference to the young artist's hopes and aspirations. Actuated by high moral or other motives, the energies and thoughts of these individuals are given to objects so far removed from the æsthetic, that beyond a passive recognition of its noble purpose, their attitude toward art is one of neutrality rather than of direct opposition. But inasmuch as they are striving for ideals of their own, devoting their energies to matters which to them are of greater consequence than art, their indifference should in nowise militate against the spirit of sincerity that moves them. If a comparison of motives were instituted, seekers after "the good, the true and the beautiful" will be found to be not so far apart as might appear at first glance. Truth and light are both essentially beautiful, and art-

ists are but moralists, if they only knew it. Having dwelt sufficiently on this topic, let us proceed to another.

From the charge that I undervalue or lack appreciation of thorough technical training, may heaven preserve me. Personally your humble servant has suffered enough to know what a handicap the need of it is. It must be true that the investigator of today supplies the genius of tomorrow, for without the one the other could not be. Whenever conditions are right, that which was intended to appear does appear. And yet I believe that the pursuit of knowledge can be, so to speak, overdone—that it may be advanced to a point where its usefulness is forfeited and it loses itself in a maze of mysticism. Undoubtedly this is true of all branches of art technique. The most profound student of music will own to a fondness if not a preference for those gloriously simple melodies bequeathed to him by his inspired masters, while wholly

## *POINT OF VIEW*

devoted to the intricacies of his art, which assuredly none would wish to deny him. Someone has said that "Music can be mathematically expressed; a Mozart sonata is governed absolutely by the laws of numbers." And yet knowing all about the laws of numbers will not enable one to compose music like Mozart, who probably had heard that there is a law of that description for collegians. This is like those learned analyses of the works of master painters, whereby it is demonstrated exactly how their compositions were constructed in accordance with certain set rules—proving that it is not a difficult matter to predict cold weather after the mercury has dropped. Your correspondent is aware that champions of exhaustive technology stand opposed to him here, and he is unprepared to controvert them in their position; but in defense he begs to say that he is merely stating personal views, for which he and he alone is responsible.

Pursue the study of technique to any point you deem proper; acquire a full knowledge of the grammar of your craft, because it is required of you to do so; but bear in mind that the great Galilean, first of all, and hundreds of other gifted men since His day, struck for that goal of goals, the human heart. Fantastically curious orchids may delight the eye momentarily, but a clover blossom, in the gamut of beauty, is more enduring. Learn to distinguish between art and fashion. That which is decidedly popular now, may, in the years to come, present a pitiful aspect. Compare the fidgety, unsatisfying Japanese school of art with that which goes to nature for its axioms. The former is artificial, stilted and decorative, much of it resembling child's play; yet it has this in common with some other schools, notably the Egyptian, that it is better than no art. An intelligent Nipponese who has for a time studied in the academies of Europe and America, having previously become im-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

bued with the forms and traditions of his native art, amuses us with his struggles in the conflict between the new and the old. Just in proportion as he gets away from the abnormal and fantastic into the realm of nature study, do his pictures become interesting. Sometimes the two are combined in a single canvas, and again he shows them separately; but no matter, the line of demarcation is perfectly defined, they mix no better than oil and water.

Really, there is such a wealth of poetry, grandeur and unaffected loveliness in nature, subject to the law of eternal change, that there is slight occasion for wandering off into regions of the unknown in search of them. They are everywhere, all around us, every hour in the day. When telling a story, to drag in a spectre is to acknowledge a paucity of invention. Lack of power indeed, is not concealed by a mask of abstruseness. If one's poem, or story, or picture is meritorious, is also founded on truth,

and has that undefinable something which touches our souls, it will always be good. But to stand the test of time it must be more than an exhibition of mere cleverness in its technical construction. It has been my good fortune to see numbers of modern European and American paintings of such strength and tenderness of treatment, along with such blending of realism and poetry, that any one of them was worth more as a source of satisfaction and pleasure than all the examples of Japanese art, with its hard outlines and weird exaggerations, put together. To sum up: the writer does not care for simple realism, because it fails to interest him; on the other hand, he is not an admirer of lifeless involutions. Is a thing lovable merely because it was difficult of accomplishment? I think not. A well-known writer asks: "Is there not a contradiction between a too lucid intelligence and the creative energy? Does not art require a portion of almost animal in-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

stinct that too much thinking is apt to destroy?" To which interrogatories, so forcibly expressing my plea for spontaneity, I should reply unhesitatingly, "Yes."

Proceeding in your career as an artist, you will, upon divers occasions, be called upon to contrast the frigid manner of dealers in paintings with that of some effusive admirers who regard your work as quite beyond criticism. The professional dealer who purposes buying, because he is confident you have what he wants, generally comes at you with such a well-feigned air of being bored to death from having great quantities of this sort of pictures submitted, that you are inclined to bristle up and say something sarcastic in their defense. Realizing that the work is not entirely devoid of merit, and presuming on his broad experience, very naturally you expect him to acknowledge it. Let me tell you that from the dealer's standpoint nosegays tossed to artists would be wasteful extravagance,

since these can be reserved for presentation to his own patrons much more advantageously. Should the dealer see nothing in your efforts to attract him, he will not hesitate to praise them; and he is liable to proffer some friendly advice before taking himself off, in the politest manner imaginable, without having made a purchase. A certain amount of experience is required before you will learn to accept his affected indifference as a matter of course, and to become justly alarmed at his encomiums. There is a story of a young farmer who took a car-load of exceptionally fine horses to market. When turned out in the yards the appearance they presented was really superb. Leisurely and with stolid countenances a group of practiced buyers assembled, and, as they looked the fine animals over, began chaffing their owner somewhat in this vein: "You must know that just now the market is overstocked with horses of this grade." "Make us a flat price on

## *POINT OF VIEW*

the lot of scrubs." "Do the breeders up your way ever rear any fine stock?" etc. Solemnly wagging their heads and conversing in whispers, gradually the dealers dropped away, till only one remained, and he would talk of nothing but politics and the weather. Our young man's heart sank as his anger arose, and he was preparing to ship his horses back to the farm, when the jovial traders, perceiving they had carried the joke to a point where it was becoming hazardous, changed their tactics and bought him out at remunerative figures.

The writer has reason to know that as a rule picture dealers are men of intelligence, courteous, sympathetic and accommodating; but he has never yet found one who differed from another, in that as long as he thinks you are to a greater or less extent dependent on his patronage and favors, and that he has a sort of exclusive proprietorship in whatever you may produce, and you are able to pull through on the limited re-

sults of the sales he may make of your pictures, he remains your steadfast friend, swearing by all the standards of affirmation that you are the cleverest of the clever ones, that you are coming to the front like a freight train on a down grade, and that your future is to be nothing short of a bed of roses, to the lulling accompaniment of mandolins and tuneful madrigals. But if he discovers that you are doing business with any of his rivals forthwith he loses interest in your work, and you are singed by his burning contempt for the other fellow.

Probably no technical expression in the entire range of art nomenclature is less understood or more difficult of definition than that of "values" or "the value of the color," having reference to the application of the myriads of tones employed in painting. The question is entirely one of proportion and consistency. What the artist wishes to imply when speaking of "correct color values," is, that each of the colors as

## *POINT OF VIEW*

it recedes in perspective sustains its proper relation to those that come before and after it according to the quality of the light which is intended or which is supposed to be shed upon the scene. To cause an effect of light—a definite kind or quality of light—to appear in your picture, aim to get the value of the color of each object as it would appear in that light, according to the key in which the picture is pitched. The quality of the light that the subject requires determines your values, and those values, if truthful, produce the effect of that light.

One kind of an effect of light may be produced by means of chiaroscuro, but it is an artificial one to be found nowhere on earth or in heaven. When the diffused light of the natural landscape, however, is judiciously intensified at the focal point of a composition by means of chiaroscuro, it is calculated to lend dramatic interest to the picture. In remarking a particularly happy rendering of true values in a pic-

ture, it may present the appearance of being easy of accomplishment, but in practice doubtless you have found it to be the most difficult problem with which the painter has to contend.

Trusting to hear from you at an early date, I remain, etc.

2

## NINTH LETTER

*Concerning One of the Annoyances which  
Serves to Embarrass the Painterman;  
Linear Perspective; Methods of Paint-  
ing; Atmosphere, etc.*

DEAR FRIEND—There are days, you inform me in your last letter, when to paint anything at all seems an impossible task—when your mind, refusing to coöperate with the brush, every movement of that serviceable utensil goes wrong. Unfortunately, it is impossible for me to congratulate you on the manifestation as an evidence of genius, albeit every artist undergoes the same experience. In the case of certain pseudo-geniuses not unknown to the writer, those days so far outnumbered the others their lights did not shine as brightly as they should have done. Some persons' brains

are always tired. The singularly obstinate behavior of the mental faculties to which you allude is supposed to result from reaction of the cerebral forces. It stands to reason that if one is lacking in respect of such properties, or neglects to employ those which have been given him, he is free from the annoyance. It is difficult to explain why an active worker, in prime condition, who can paint at his best for four consecutive days, should, on the fifth, find himself unable to do anything. Organizations so constituted as to be materially affected by the external influences about them, all have periods of mental inaction, when they are balked in their desire to create something where nothing was before.

Whenever my own wits take one of those spells of contrariness and go off on a "strike," I have recourse to several methods, one or the other of which usually effects a change. Idly strolling alone on a summer's day in the fields and woods, or taking

## *POINT OF VIEW*

a brisk walk anywhere outdoors in winter, almost invariably restores them to their normal state; or, that failing, mingling with the crowds down town and dissipating the ego, gives my mind its needed rest. Should neither of these measures succeed in bringing about the desired result, suspicion attaches to my physical condition, wherefore the doctor prescribes something not nearly so pleasant as a ramble in the woods.

Entirely independent of the phenomenon of these "off days," as they are designated by painters, it is true, and presumably always will remain true, that despite conditions favorable or otherwise, the work of no artist is of a uniform tenor or quality. Obviously much must depend on his mental state, his bodily health and his environment — a formidable combination for influencing results. The artist's temperament, generally speaking, knows no intermediate stage between buoyant felicity and utter dejection. Unless he is happy he is "blue,"

so that it must be, perennially for him, either heaven or the other place. If one believes everything one hears, however, he may be persuaded that somewhere, away off yonder, there exists a highly favored race of extraordinarily skillful painters who experience no difficulty whatever in doing that which they wish to do—a model variety of artists who never err. Every picture they paint is good, their touch is sure, their judgment infallible. Palaver to this effect would seem to have been devised expressly for the ears of youthful aspirants for fame, to make them believe that in their fumbling manner of painting mediocre pictures frequently, and good ones only now and then, they stand alone, because away off in the land of somewhere things are not done that way. You should be told that expressions of this kind emanate from individuals who know about as little of art as it is possible to know. Not infrequently they will be found to be dealers in pictures, and not the

## *POINT OF VIEW*

squarest of dealers at that. No real painter ever gave utterance to such inanities. Since the time when art had its birth, right on down to the present day, the best and cleverest of men have found a perplexing problem in the making of a picture—a vexatious puzzle which causes them to worry over their canvases till forced to put them aside, to be taken up and the work resumed under more auspicious circumstances, or when new thoughts have come to them. Indeed, the fact of itself confirms their position as such, and, with ripening powers, greater demands arise, till responsibilities, like storm clouds rolling up from the horizon, accumulate above their heads for the cataclysm that inevitably comes and clears their skies forever.

Years ago, when a certain vivacious colt, who since then has grown to be an old horse, and at present is occupied in scanning these lines through spectacles, was vainly striving to paint pictures without in

the least knowing how, it was customary amongst pupils at that period to decry the study of linear perspective as an abstruse something calculated to encumber those splendid flights of the imagination wherein your true genius is supposed to be at all times ready to indulge. Men who know little or nothing about the science of perspective, and yet have arisen to the top, were cited as examples of what could be done without its aid, at the same time that others with an all-around knowledge of that science at their fingers' ends and who had failed of recognition, were held up as warnings. You know how easy it is to convince a boy that the thing he does not like to do would be just as well left undone. The logic is irresistible; and as it so happened that my precious noddle and the multiplication table were not even neighborly, I fell an early and complete victim to the prevalent fallacy, with the result that all through life I have been forced to halt and

## *POINT OF VIEW*

hobble where I might just as well have gone untrammelled. If you can, my dear sir, bring yourself to believe that my advice is not entirely worthless, you will accept it in this instance, and include among your serious studies that of linear perspective.

I find it a matter of some difficulty to repress a smile when pausing long enough to reflect upon the prodigious bump of self-assurance required to enable one to sit down, as I am doing at this moment, and undertake to counsel another in matters relating to art, with the assumption that his knowledge of the theme is sufficient to warrant a preceptor's license, when, as we all know, art is not only without canons, but is boundless. That the art of today will not be that of some future era, is a pretty safe conjecture. Just now advanced students are seeking to interpret accurately the æsthetic phases of what we call "nature," in contradistinction to "life." The drawing of something di-

rectly from something is no better art now than it was in that golden age when the old masters, because they were poets as well as painters, strove, with regard to figure painting, for the sublimation of idealism; and it is precisely because they were uncommon men that the world venerates them. Shakespeare's name will go down as one of the "old masters" of literature—and why? Not for the reason that his work is good literature, for numbers of writers have done as well or better, but because it is fiction, pure and simple—the day dreams of a gifted genius. Æsop's fables have survived for the same reason. Charles Dickens, the marvel of the nineteenth century, wrote fiction, but who is there to deny his fidelity to nature or his wonderful accuracy in the portrayal of human emotions? High art is fictional. Landscape paintings which deserve to live are creations, inventions, pure fictions. Studio language is without an equivalent for "transcript," or I could

tell you in one word what a good landscape is not.

The old masters were not students of landscape painting in the sense in which the term is employed at present. We live in an age when renowned figure painters and portrait artists, not satisfied with their meed of success, and seeking a vent for their consuming love of the idyllic, must enter the lists of students of landscape. The intellectual, cultured world of today is admiring nature out-of-doors, with its changeful skies, its broad sweeps of sunlight and shadow, its vistas of tender color and its wealth of emotional suggestiveness. What that world will be worshipping centuries hence is entirely problematical.

The question arises, how can we, by following in the footsteps of others, expect to be original? I would not wish to be understood as meaning bizarre, for that quality in landscape work is unbearable. Any suggestions of freakishness or garish effects in-

tended to catch the vulgar eye, in a picture of any description, press against my nerves till they hurt. Do not imagine that because someone else's fanciful flight attracts attention, while your effort goes unnoticed, that you are necessarily on the wrong road. A bedizened Cyprian parading the streets is the observed of all observers. See her you must—you can not ignore the cannon's below—but to see is not to admire. Whatever of merit your work possesses will be certain to be seen and appreciated by a discriminating class, a word from one of whom, as the great poet has said, outweighs the opinions of a whole theater of the others.

Would you care to know my opinion of so-called "broad" treatment, importing not pictorial breadth, but brush-work? Having one, I am vain enough to think it worth considering. The ability to arrange splashes of pigment so that a space of thirty or forty feet must intervene before they

## *POINT OF VIEW*

can be made to assume the forms of well-drawn objects is uncalled-for in ordinary work. This is merely an exhibition of adroitness, and adroitness of itself does not represent the soul of art. Should the canvas be intended to grace the wall of an amphitheater or a skating-rink, very well; but if it is for the drawing-room or vestibule of a residence, you are making a mistake. Affectation of breadth is displeasing. That there are always to be found individuals who will rave over breadth gone mad is undisputed, but these are only a part of the world, not all of it. Art students are inclined to seek solace in fads, and just now this is one of them. Broad execution is quite commendable, but in drawing the line between breadth and silly attention to detail, see that it parallels common sense and reason. Does this idea agree with my contention that a thing can be so clever that it is not clever? Pathos, you know, may be rendered laughable. "Hello, Mike," cried a

workman on the wall above to his fellow below, "is the line plumb?" "Yis, sor," was Mike's rejoinder, "it is, sor—and two inches over!"

As a bit of aside, I would like to ask if you are partial to disputatious wrangles. If so, just find a little knot of working artists who, having come together and for want of something to amuse themselves, are discussing methods of painting in general. Should the views of any two of them be found to coincide, the circumstance may be set down as miraculous. Artists never agree about anything connected with their vocation. Come to think of it, is not art itself full of seeming contradictions, and if it were not, would it interest us as it does? Even our ancient, time-tried friend the weather, than which nothing is surer or more stable, has been charged with fickleness!

Trifling as it appears, the question of how pigments should be spread on canvas, whether thickly or thinly, presents oppor-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

tunities for most distressing controversies. Perhaps as good a plan to adopt as any is to begin applying them in accordance with your own inclination and let the fixed method, which will come later, be the result of experience and practice. The avoidance of extremes is an eminently proper rule to adopt. Seek the "golden mean," the true philosophy of life, in all things. Whether the paint is laid on with a palette knife or with a brush matters not, provided the color is right and your work is signalized by good drawing. But every painter knows that neither deep, rich tones nor pure high lights are secured with single coatings of pigment over white canvas. Purity and depth are gained by means of successive layers of the same or analogous colors, a process that can be obviated only through the employment of impasto. Some artists get a high degree of luminosity in shadows by spreading a warm color over those places so thinly that the white canvas shines through,

after which enough gray is introduced to harmonize them.

Apart from this there are, broadly speaking, two distinct methods of treatment in landscape painting, one of which is known as the tight or precise and the other the free or loose manner. Quite needless to say that the first-named style is abhorred by devotees of the loose method, nor that the second is most heartily despised by gentlemen who paint the other way. Personally I belong to those who advocate exceedingly free treatment for landscapes—provided you are sufficiently skillful and have studied nature to some purpose. If not, paint just as tight as possible. I have heard of an artist whose nearly-completed canvas was flung by a sudden gust of wind, “buttered side down,” upon a surprisingly dirty floor. Filled with dismay the luckless fellow seized a brush and after working for hours, lifting off here and there particles of smudge, was felici-

tating himself on being about ready to begin repainting it, though doubting seriously whether restoration was possible, when the occupant of an adjoining studio sauntered in. "For heaven's sake, Brownly," the latter exclaimed as he squared himself in front of the other's picture, "don't do another thing to that sketch. Why, man, your progress is phenomenal—I never saw you paint atmosphere so well!"

Which brings to mind an outing party I once accompanied, where a young lady with muddy shoes accidentally stepped on a sketch made by one of the boys. Hurriedly wiping it off with her apron, she, too, discovered the presence of that unheard-of quality—*atmosphere*—in the young man's work. Another incident, more laughable, which occurred that day, was when the same girl's pet dog got a tube of rose madder in his mouth and tried to masticate it. Dripping with what appeared to be blood, the distressed animal ran from one member of the party to

another, seeking sympathy, raising excitement and precipitating a deluge of tears, because his mistress thought some terrible accident had befallen him. Later, everybody, with one exception, roared loudly. The exception was the owner of the tube of rose madder.

With best wishes, I beg to remain, etc.

## TENTH LETTER

*Gives, Along with Some Prefatory Remarks  
Appropriate to the Subject, Criticisms  
of Several Outdoor Sketches Submitted  
for the Purpose.*

FRIEND NORMANDIN—The half dozen sketches from nature you sent me were delivered several days ago, but my time having been taken up with other matters, their examination has been deferred till now. To assert that it affords me pleasure to look them over with critical eye and set purpose to discern their faults, is not precisely the thought I wish to express. More properly speaking, I am both surprised and delighted with the vigor, correct taste and spirit of sincerity you have shown here; and as for their shortcomings, if my strictures in dealing with them have the appearance of merciless

onslaughts, you may console yourself with the reflection that they are not to be looked upon as fatal decrees. Your judgment, assuredly, may be relied upon to tell you when your critic is right, just as it will inform you if there exists a legitimate doubt as to the soundness of his views. I shall not hesitate to make it plain whenever I think your work is good nor exert myself to spare your feelings in pointing out mistakes. The only feeling that an artist at the age of twenty, or three times twenty and ten more besides, should entertain with reference to the painting of pictures, is the paramount one of wishing to learn more than he already knows. The narrow-minded man who neither relishes nor appreciates criticism, who winces beneath its wholesome lash, and is disposed to regard its author as merely a fault-finder, will never attain a very high degree of proficiency as an artist. Such a one deliberately places a clog upon his progress. If he is satisfied to accept his own crude in-

itial efforts there is absolutely no hope of his ever getting beyond them.

To the oldest as well as the ablest of painters a gratuitous, friendly criticism, from whatever source, is always welcome—it is so suggestive of getting something for nothing; and if that is not a veritable characteristic of our species of animal, where shall we look for one? When you have worked for hours with extreme caution around a certain spot with a determination not to spoil what you are pleased to consider a charming effect in your picture, it is refreshing, though slightly jarring, to have an acquaintance enter and proceed to express, unhesitatingly and without equivocation, his disapproval of that particular portion. But mark you: the moment your visitor asserts that it is wrong—that it is too dark, too light, too warm, too cold, or too something else—instantly you are disillusioned and you perceive it as he does. Have you never experienced this? Absorbed as he probably is in the task of at-

tending to details, the toiler is prone to overlook the impression his product in its entirety will produce on a pair of eyes beholding it for the first time. Instead of scanning it for blemishes, instinctively a fresh eye sweeps the canvas in search of whatever is good; so far from being capiously inclined, it is more likely to be over-charitable in its desire to imagine it sees something where nothing really is, aside from some variegated splashes of paint remotely suggesting a picture.

In this connection it must, however, be conceded that there are criticisms and also *criticisms*. One of my own studies was once the recipient of a comment that for naïveté and originality impressed me greatly. It was during an unusually wet summer that a gentleman gave an order for a large oil. When done he had it framed and placed over a mantel in their drawing-room as a surprise for his aged mother, who was absent from home at the time. Meeting that

estimable lady on her return and mentally noting that during our conversation she made no mention of it, finally I could no longer refrain from asking, point-blank, how she liked the new picture. "Oh," came the answer, "I think it very good—yes, it is a very good picture indeed; but I must candidly confess that I do not like your thunder clouds, because you know we have had *so* much rain this season that really I can't bear to look at them!" Every time the good woman's glance alighted on my summer clouds surcharged with humidity, not unlikely she shuddered at the very thought of another storm. Tributes sometimes come disguised.

Returning to our sketches, you will find that I have taken the liberty of numbering them from one to six, giving to each as nearly as possible a rating numerically the reverse of its artistic value. Number one, therefore, possessing the least merit, I shall take up first, reserving number six to be

passed over to you last as an agreeable dessert of pie or pudding with plums in it. As it is so much the weakest example in the series, slight difficulty would be found in imagining number one to have come from the hand of another, were it not that every artist's work is more or less uneven. Like good breakfast bacon, he alternates his streaks of fat with an occasional one of lean. To begin with, your sky is much too blue. You never saw a real sky the color of the one here depicted. You only thought you saw it. Looking upward on a perfectly clear day we gaze through a transparent luminous medium, somewhat aqueous, into an illimitable region of ether beyond. As the sun shines on the minute particles of moisture with which our restless atmosphere is charged, the sky presents a quality of color that is anything but distinctly blue. Once I had to pass daily along a certain sidewalk across which had been placed a sign bearing the word "Tinsmith" in large letters of sil-

ver. These letters, although absolutely opaque, invariably gave me the impression, whenever they caught my eye, of being openings in the signboard through which the sky could be seen. Then and there your humble servant learned his lesson, to wit, that a clear sky in summer or autumn comes nearer being the color of silver than any other material to which it can be likened. A mere suspicion of blue permeating a sunny, cloudless sky is legitimate, certainly, but it must be as the touch of a fairy. Where the firmament shows through rifts of white cumulous clouds in spring, a tone of color approaching blue sometimes appears, but even this is apt to mislead the eye; its hue is many, many removes from that of pure pigment. Having found the correct prevailing tone, a kind of tremulousness, obtained by the intermingling of different shades of the same or analogous colors, in the sky is excellent because true. Extreme softness in color and contour throughout

should characterize the handling of cloud forms.

Now, sir, having knocked in the head, drawn, quartered and hung up in the smoke house your beautiful blue sky in the picture under consideration, let us proceed to see what there is to attack in the distance. If the latter were distinguished by fewer faults it would be not uninteresting. For the most part it is sufficiently gray, soft, misty and atmospheric; but the trees on the left at the base of the hills are not correct in value, being too strong for the position they occupy. The most palpable fault, however, lies in the range of hills themselves, standing up there so regularly, one, two, three, four, like cadets on parade. Doubtless when sketching them they appeared that way; but you should have done something to break their monotony. A couple of good, sweeping strokes with a large flat brush carrying sky color and placed just right would have accomplished

wonders in the way of redemption. And then, too, their entire outline is unduly distinct. The natural appearance of your row of hills would have been improved had you merged them into the sky at intervals till they were all but lost. Away off to the right there is to be seen a something which gives rise to conjecture as to whether it really is a sheet of water or an exotic variety of grass. A trifle more of precision here would have set at rest all conflicting doubts. Really, the whole trouble with this distant view is that you have shown too much precision in places where it was uncalled for, and hardly enough in others where it was actually needed.

Taking up the middle distance in this drawing, a single criticism of a somewhat sweeping character will suffice. Your middle distance is so restricted that it would seem as if some portion of it must have been omitted, either intentionally or accidentally. What there is of it is good. Coming thus

to the foreground, very little can be offered in the way of commendation. The effect is easy and natural where those bits of red clay show through the grass, and your trees are gracefully formed. But the whole effect is spoiled by an excess of cold gray colors prevailing throughout. The absence of red and yellow—those warm, life-giving hues—is felt at a glance. Across the foreground extends a shadow that has not sufficient red in it to modify the shades of green with which it is so abundantly supplied. Hardness of outline characterizes the road leading from the immediate foreground into the picture; but this is by no means an uncommon error for a beginner to make, since about one-half the pictures to be seen hanging in residences exhibit the same fault. Contrasted with the adjacent herbage, our roadway is sadly lacking also in strength of color. Automobiles and heavily laden wagons supposedly pass along here, for which reason the road ought to

look as if it were solid enough to sustain them. Ordinary dirt roads must be made to appear as solid as the earth beneath the grass. A load of corn, for instance, can not be conveniently transported over a roadbed of unbleached muslin.

The asseveration that this sketch is the worst of all should not be taken as a condemnation of everything in it. Several good features present themselves, not the least of which is the drawing of the trees in the foreground. Stately, well-balanced and symmetrical in contour, agreeably massed and modeled, this clump is at once dignified and engaging, only wanting additional warmth of color to place it beyond my power of criticism. A commendable feature is the region contiguous to where your roadway disappears down the hill, because something is here left for the imagination. If you will kindly take the trouble to search for the reason why number one is your least successful out-door sketch, no doubt you

will find it lies in the fact that you began wrong. The intensely blue key in which it is pitched being at fault, you were all the while working uphill, so to speak.

I shall have to stop writing now, but you shall hear from me again soon. With sincere regards, etc.

## ELEVENTH LETTER

*Concludes the Criticisms of the Outdoor Sketches*

DEAR FRIEND—Today I showed your collection of pastoral sketches to an intimate artist friend who happened in. I must confess that this was a violation of confidence, but did it in hopes he would aid my criticisms. The only declaration I got from him was that they were excellent.

In sketch number two, entitled "The Canal," the most serious error is again one of values. Your landscape, which is pretty good in spots, and your sky, which is not at all bad, do not hang together. Either the latter is too high or the scene beneath it is too low in key; and as a consequence the water in the canal, although correct in value as to the sky, is out of harmony with

its banks and other surroundings. If the tone of both the sky and water are lowered till they accord with the rest of the scene, I think you will find this picture improved about sixty per cent. Work some touches of subdued gray tones into the immediate foreground, and observe if it is not rendered more agreeable to the eye. The mechanical iron bridge in the middle distance doubtless is a serviceable one, and is well worth the money, but inasmuch as it detracts from the picture's interest rather than adds to it, it would just as well have been overlooked when you were drawing the scene. I like the way in which you have handled the towpath; its treatment is simple, as it should be, and the color is good. A few additional touches of warm color at the horizon would have imparted to the sky a more natural appearance. The delicate glow was there, even if you failed to perceive it. A sky of this description is always warmer at that point. Some

of the trees are rather more suggestive of paint than verdure, due to a lack of modeling.

The opportunity of directing your attention to something you have done in this sketch which appears in none of the others can not be neglected. Although by no means a fatal mistake, it is serious enough to warrant mention. Your signature at the bottom of the picture is a trifle larger than necessary. This caution is offered with a view to all your future work. Probably you recollect David Harum's quaint motto. Very well; when it comes to signing your name, just consider that if it is a little too small it is about right. The idea was hit off very neatly in a newspaper squib, accompanied by an illustration. A woman is standing in an artist's studio viewing a picture on that gentleman's easel. "Why, Mr. Stretcher," she exclaimed, "this little sketch is so very good that I should think you would sign

it." "I have signed it; don't you see," rejoined the painter. "Oh! really," she cried, "I beg your pardon; I thought that was a part of the fence!" Nor will a better occasion ever offer than right now, perhaps, for making a suggestion with reference to bestowing titles on pictures. In designating by name your more ambitious canvases, endeavor to select only those which are appropriate and as truly descriptive of the subject as possible. A misleading or far-fetched title given to any artistic or literary production is in questionable taste. As the sketches arranged here in front of me are properly named, these last remarks do not apply to them.

Sketch number three, entitled "Autumn near Beechwood," has some good points. No improvement could be suggested on the grouping of the farm buildings nor their color, unless it were to say that some added effects of slightly contrasting light and shade would have brightened them a

bit. They are almost too quiet. If you should adopt my suggestion and make this change, handle them as gently as you would a bumblebee. The farm horse engaged in drinking from a stone trough beside the barn, together with the spring wagon to which the animal is hitched, form an effective group; but if they had been treated with less sharpness of outline, you would have shown consideration for the unities.

“The Old-Time Tavern,” sketch number four, presents a well-balanced composition; but the shadow of the large tree cast conspicuously across the road is much too warm, particularly at its edges, where it should have been cooler. The trees near the inn are stiff and conventional. Since the edifice itself displays a number of straight lines, that was good and sufficient reason for the avoidance of anything like rigidity in the neighboring trees. This is one of those places where that un-

definable rule of contrast applies. Your treatment of the sky and distant effect is extremely happy, because it shows snap and crispiness and good color values. Had these qualities been carried into the rest of the picture, you would have had a fine thing. As a matter of fact the values elsewhere are at fault. How can you, for example, reconcile those brown shadows in your large tree with its cool green foliage in sunlight—or this same foliage with your yellow-toned sky? Are you quite sure that they appeared that way in nature? The stones beside the roadway should have more warmth; they are much too blue. This is another of those pitfalls into which it is only too easy to stumble.

Sketch number five, "Shady Brook," is the first to show harmony in its general tone. It possesses atmosphere, because you kept your colors subdued and well in hand. The color values of sky and earth are good as related to each other. The board-

covered rustic bridge at the extreme right-hand side of the sketch is well drawn and sufficiently "shaky." Your reflections of the opposite bank of the brook betray an excess of blue, while the shadows cast upon the ground from the overhanging willows are hardly blue enough. These willow trees, by the way, are cleverly done, evincing conscientious study of the subject. More breadth of treatment throughout would have strengthened the sketch and enhanced its beauty. You must strive for breadth, simplicity, fidelity. By reason of the middle distance being so well done and made so interesting, the entire absence of distance is scarcely noticeable.

We are now come to number six, the last and decidedly best sketch of the lot. As it is without a title I am left to infer that you thought it hardly worth naming. An all-around clever production of this kind should serve as a motive for a canvas of sterling merit, and bring its author a

good price; but it will not, because the very boldness of its simplicity and the total absence of claptrap precludes any likelihood of its ever being sold to anybody at any price. The public buys works of art possessing some of the elements of poetry; but if these should happen to be real gems they are passed by as not offering quite enough for the money. This is one of those pictures in which the artist would seem to have had something to tell, and has not only told it, but did so in a creditable manner.

That richly colored mass of shimmering green trees in the middle distance stays where it belongs, shows good depth and is refreshingly cool, suggesting possibilities as to young squirrels and pink anemones. An interesting brooklet meandering across the meadow loses itself occasionally amongst the sedges as it flows toward the foreground. I feel sure that the source of this stream is hemmed about with beds of

velvety moss and water cress. In the open field to the right are a number of lights and shadows thrown in promiscuously, from which my wayward fancy evolves a group of industrious yeomen employed in threshing grain. I can almost imagine Hank Smithers, who is feeding the machine, remarking to Zeb. Hawkins on the wagon, in a tone sufficiently loud to be heard above the din, that he "reckons ther ain't a purtier gal in this county than"—and then the sound is carried away by the veering breeze, leaving everybody to the windward in an exasperating state of uncertainty as to the charmer's identity. And that luscious, dreamy stretch of distance! What really is there I am unable to say, but what I think I see is a broad valley covered with fields and blackbirds and trees and fences and clusters of cottages and church spires, over and beyond which spreads a gray mist enveloping the receding hills. You perceive now where and how you have

succeeded. Your sketch of this scene is true in tone and values, and is so freely and dexterously drawn that it is not only "all there," but abounds in that rare quality known as suggestiveness, which enables the beholder to see things the artist did not expect him to see.

By the way, I wish you could inform me where you obtained the fine wood panels used in the making of these sketches. I strongly suspect they were the handiwork of some honest worker in Beechwood (may his tribe be kept in ignorance of race suicide!), and if so, I am going to ask you to request him to make at his convenience a couple of dozen just like these, and forward them to me with his bill. There is nothing better for outdoor sketching than well-seasoned panels.

Your sketches are being returned by express to-day. Trusting they may reach you unharmed, I beg to remain, etc.

## TWELFTH LETTER

*Concerning Foggy Seasons, the Genius of  
the Garret, and Artists Generally*

DEAR FRIEND—You have no occasion to render such profuse thanks for those feeble criticisms, since to me the pleasure of scanning your sketches in search of them was unalloyed, I can assure you. It is to be hoped that my indifferently expressed hints may prove helpful to one who esteems them as you do. And while I think of it, there is a trifling matter having reference to your treatment of shadows which I omitted to mention in its proper place. Paint these broadly and in masses, permitting soft, uncertain lights to creep into them here and there just sufficient to break their boundary lines. Shadow is a thing to be felt rather than seen. I recall, too,

that all of your outdoor work would appear to have been done in clear weather—in fact, if I must say it, in painfully clear weather. It is advisable to keep a portable sketching outfit constantly in readiness to take advantage of hazy or foggy periods. If there ever comes a moment when sketching from nature yields true gratification it is when billowy hills and tree tops come peeping through the fog. At such a season the so-called "simple child of nature" finds his gentle recompense. The concrete world is then abandoned for an unreal, intangible one, wherein unrestrained fancy rules the market and prosy facts go for a song. What delicious views of the river and of fading forests pitching downward into seas of silvery mist, and of shadowy hayricks and dreamy clusters of farm buildings present themselves to the sketcher's enraptured gaze! How eagerly and all aglow with excitement he unstraps his kit, and with nervous fingers hurriedly

## *POINT OF VIEW*

“goozles” the pigments over his palette in an overwhelming anxiety to seize some portion of the many catchy motives abounding on every hand; and plunging into the midst of them, how lost he becomes and oblivious alike to the flight of time or the affairs of men. Well may he then exclaim, “The world is mine!” for it is all here in front of him, with nothing to be seen beyond those faintly outlined vistas of river, vanishing woods and unsubstantial stacks and houses. After foggy days the next best are the clear ones succeeding prolonged rains, when pools of water gleaming in ruts and ditches along the roadways present here and there touches of sky color and a pleasing variety of broken reflections to animate the landscape.

In the miscellaneous assortment of queer objects passing along life’s dusty turnpike, not infrequently we meet persons of intelligence who, despite evidences to the con-

trary which are manifest every mile of the way, cling to a set of exploded hand-me-downs in the shape of ancient saws, among which is the one about necessity being "the mother of invention." From this moldy source comes the erroneous idea that if you would bring out of him the best that there is in him, take care to place your artist (whose clay is different from the rest of mankind) on a meager diet of boiled potatoes, sans butter, and relegate him to a garret; for if by any chance he succeeds in getting a few dollars ahead he will decline to "invent." I don't believe it. No man whose mind is distracted by a lack of the needful to supply his daily wants can paint his best pictures. On the contrary the writer knows from actual experience that nothing is so conducive to an optimistic spirit nor so stimulative to the creative faculties as the knowledge that one's absolute necessities are provided for. Were the adage true, the merchant with

the least number of patrons would be the most enterprising, and as a consequence would have the best store; and the lawyer yearning for clients would be the most successful pleader and occupy the finest suite of offices. But that would be getting things reversed from the usual order. Human nature is human nature, and nobody calls up a doctor who never has patients. The moderately prosperous painter is better equipped to produce good work than his less fortunate brother who lives on nothing nowhere. While preaching top lofts and crusts of bread as an incentive for developing the artistic instinct, one can not help observing that advocates of the chimera never on their own account stop laboring year in and year out to demonstrate that "nothing succeeds like success." As for "necessity," about the only thing it ever invented or produced was a whine, an ugly growl or a case of illness. You may infer from what is here written that

your correspondent is insensible to the advantages accompanying the profession of an artist. On the contrary, he is fully alive to them. That for which we are unwilling to make a sacrifice is not worth having. A young friend of mine who was a good painter but encountered serious difficulties in trying to make ends meet, once called on William M. Hunt at his studio in Boston. Incidentally in the course of a decidedly pleasant conversation the youth told Mr. Hunt of some of the troubles he was having, which enlisted that gentleman's sympathies, but it also brought from him this pointed inquiry: "Are you not willing to dwell in a garret and live on boiled potatoes for a few years? If not, you don't deserve to succeed as an artist."

Yet, after all, taking it up one side and down the other, the life of an artist is not the worst conceivable. Pleasure and pain attend him at recurrent intervals pretty much as they do other people. His hap-

piest moments come with the completion of a successful picture, and melancholy sets in when he realizes at the close of a hard day's work that it is another case of "love's labor lost." Possessing, as the most of them do, a vein of philosophy, they find it comes in handy on occasions. That members of the profession are a happy-go-lucky lot, or that they are alike in any particular, is an erroneous idea. No set of men present more individuality. Some of them toss silver and paper currency into their overcoat pockets along with gloves, muffler and handkerchief, while others wear corduroy trousers and get up in the night to count their money. If it is a penny short, they stay up. Radically different was that one in Paris who died without knowing what he was worth financially. Upon receiving pay for a picture, invariably he threw the stuff over his head backwards into a pile of lumber, a jumble of odds and ends, at one end of his studio.

At another time, upon being presented with a bill, he would say to the collector, "Come, let us go look for some money." Together they would then search until a sum was found sufficient to discharge the obligation.

Nearly every artist I have ever known had another talent in addition to that of painting. Among these were droll story tellers, dialect speakers, impersonators, musicians, orators, writers, actors, etc. Up in Wisconsin there is one who writes doggerel. He presented me with a copy of the following example of his efforts in blank verse; and as it is not altogether pointless, I am passing it along to you. He calls it:

#### A CRITIC AT THE EXHIBITION

Why, hello, Tom! I'm glad to see you here  
Among the purty pictures. Art is long, I've heerd,  
And life is goll darned short—but not as short  
As it might be, when trouble comes a-knockin'.  
Good show? Well, yes; I s'pose it's got to do;  
It seems there's nothin' better bein' done.

## *POINT OF VIEW*

The things they paint these days is sorry stuff.  
Ambition no one 'pears to have, above  
Portrayin' of the sky and sea and fields,  
And bubbly streams meanderin' through the weeds.  
Just look'ee there!—No, not that daub of paint,  
Intended, I suppose, for dashin' waves—  
I mean that big one there—the frame itself  
Would cost a man as much as forty dollars—  
You call that Art? A swipe of greenish earth  
With yaller clouds and shadders in the pool?  
Let's glance around. Now, what do you think of  
that?

A man who calls himself an artist, goes  
And paints the snow as blue as all git out!  
'Most all the snow we've saw was white—eh, Tom?  
And here's another. Thought it had some merit?  
If I was judge, I'd jail a man for that!  
Them mountains and that light across the marsh  
Are good; and so's the trees and fields and creek.  
But why stop there? Could he have showed a rail-  
way  
And train of cars—the locomotive whistlin'  
To scare a grazin' heifer off the track;  
And some one in the distance feedin' pigs,  
He might have called it, then, a work of art!  
I would n't give a whoop for all that's here.  
Outlandish landscapes and marines and—pshaw!  
Why don't they paint some human interest things—  
The stuff that stirs mankind to noble deeds—  
Instead of tiresome trash? If I could draw,  
I'd paint the grandest things you ever seen!

Forgive me, my dear Normandin, this time and I'll promise you never to do it again. Trusting that in the future you will paint the snow sufficiently white, I remain, Sincerely yours, etc.

## THIRTEENTH LETTER

### *Touching the Matter of Exhibition Juries, and a Word About Popular Fallacies*

MY DEAR FRIEND—Something I read in a newspaper yesterday suggested the idea that to write a word to you regarding exhibitions of paintings in public art galleries would not be amiss. Quite regularly, when these events come around, some touchy contributor whose dyspepsia at the time chances to be more distressing than usual, loses his temper and fairly bursts with indignation when his picture is submitted to the jury of selection and respectfully declined. He insists on taking the incident as personal, when it is nothing of the sort. It is true that nearly all of the artists go in for these affairs with the proper idea, and are perfectly content,

whichever way the cat jumps, to abide by the jury's decision, their self-esteem being not so pronounced but that they can take into consideration the possibility of the acceptance or rejection of a proffered "masterpiece" by an exceedingly close shave—which there is reason to think happens not infrequently. Out of, we will say, one thousand canvases submitted it is the jury's task—its thankless task—to select, perhaps, three hundred, that being the number to which the allotted space limits them. With them the main object of course is to give as good an exhibition of current art as it is possible to secure from the material at hand, which would call for variety as well as excellence of subject. It stands to reason that if four or five paintings of woods in autumn are among the lot, the jurors are not likely to choose more than two or three. Now, if these four or five paintings are of a uniform quality, one averaging about as good as another,

are not the jurymen truly beset to decide which of them will best answer the purpose? If we really think the gentlemen comprising the jury ought to have charity for us, why can not we for goodness' sake try and have some for them? While gratifying your taste and requirements in the purchase of a hat, you do not thereby intend to disparage or dispute the merits of any of the other hats the dealer may have to offer. Rejection does not necessarily imply condemnation. Suppose the jury of selection to be about equally divided as to the worthiness or availability of two good pictures, and the vote of a single member decides which of them shall be accepted. Has the author of the rejected canvas any cause for complaint, when if the deciding vote had been by chance left to another member it might have gone in? Or, viewing the matter in a different light: two moonlight pictures, we will say, are sent in, one of which is very much superior

to the other, and that you unluckily are responsible for the "other." Having the good of the cause at heart, are you not pleased to concur in the jury's judgment? Or would you prefer to have had them reject the better one and hang the failure instead of—but I won't say it. Artists should bear in mind that it is only by having an intelligent set of men fix and adhere to a high standard that the exhibitions have any value for them; nor should they forget that juries are composed of individuals who are quite as fallible as the rest of us. It is not uncommon for contributors to put their rejected canvases aside, enter the same at a subsequent exhibition and have them accepted.

And yet it would seem as if the little troubles of life are, after all, the things which make it worth while. Can you conceive of a condition drearier than uninterrupted bliss? On this score the artistic mind rests easy, but in that of the general

public there is always adrift without rudder or compass the battered, illusionary notion that the career of a professional artist comes so near being an admirable blending of rapturous pleasure with delicious spells of dreamy idleness that it is the very next thing to a bed of roses. The general public, seated within an elaborately appointed theater, listening to good music and observing the bonhomie and apparent ease with which the actors speak their lines, cherishes a somewhat similar opinion with reference to stage life. It may be just as well to continue maintaining these dazzling fictions, since their indulgence is an inexpensive luxury that possibly exerts something of a neutralizing influence to counteract the rigors of stern reality. It is but reasonable to assert, however, that no profession is attended by difficulties so entirely disproportioned to its aggregate emoluments as that of the painter's. The doctor, the lawyer, the actor, the architect,

the musician, the writer, each and all of them, is well paid for his labor and years of study. Should one of these succeed in reaching the top round of the ladder in his profession, a rich reward awaits him; but even if enabled to ascend only a few rounds his abilities command an income not entirely beneath contempt. The public annually contributes millions of dollars toward the support of the stage, and a legion of hospitals with their myriads of cots of pain serve to give some idea of what is the physician's share. For every man who buys an original picture a dozen or twenty men become involved in litigation to keep the wolf from the lawyer's door, and if every house newly built was supplied with one good painting the discrepancy at present existing between the architect's and the artist's income would be less apparent. We readily pay for the privilege of listening to music—nobody thinks of asking the player to exert himself for nothing—but

## *POINT OF VIEW*

who ever thinks of paying for the gratification of viewing an artist's work? Richly endowed art museums purchase the finest of pictures in order that the world may see them without cost. Leaving writers out of the question, the minister then and the painter come the nearest to meeting on common ground in this respect; but I shall maintain till I am black in the face that as a rule the former is financially rewarded the better of the two. He is not obliged to invest all of his spare change in expensive materials, and his work, like that of the other professions alluded to, again excepting writers, is sometimes subject to repetition. The poorest paintings of a mediocre artist outlast their author. They are handed down from generation to generation, and if it were not for an occasional "disastrous conflagration," would last practically forever.

Another of the fallacies prevailing is that the landscape painter's is an exceed-

ingly "nice" occupation—as dainty as a woman's perfumed glove. Supposedly, after breakfasting at nine in the morning and donning a suit of silk velvet, this fortunate individual repairs to his studio, where for an hour or more he enjoys himself in lifting with a brush and placing on canvas bits of lovely color, ready mixed and harmonizing perfectly; and as these go on, a delightfully pleasing picture appears in front of him. His day's work being now done, he lights a twenty-five cent cigar and steps back to admire the airy creation. Whenever an artist is observed to be looking real hard at one of his own pictures you may be sure he is admiring it—that is a way they have. The complacent gentleman may find it necessary to add another touch or two of rich ultramarine or deep rose or golden orange here and there, but the probabilities are that the picture already is perfect and nothing more will need to be done to it. The first visitor

*POINT OF VIEW*

who enters his studio praises the sketch highly, buys it at any old price, and goes off leaving a check for enough money to keep the painter going for a long, long time.

With sentiments of high esteem, I remain,  
etc.

## FOURTEENTH LETTER

*Having Divulged About All He Knows,  
the Author is Constrained to Bid His  
Fellow Student an Affectionate Fare-  
well*

MY DEAR FRIEND—For more reasons than one, your correspondent sincerely regrets that, owing to opposing circumstances, an exceedingly protracted period may elapse before he will be able to communicate with you again. If the missives he has penned you from time to time have been deemed worthy of preservation, a careful review of them, aside from their angles of persiflage and pleasantries, will disclose that he has told about all there is to tell concerning landscape painting beyond that which is taught in the regular schools of art. As remarked at the be-

## *POINT OF VIEW*

ginning, I must acknowledge myself incapable of teaching you how to do that which you wish to do. I have endeavored to tell you conscientiously, not how to paint a picture, for that you can do already, but to direct your careful attention to certain basic studies which must be pursued industriously before one can hope to paint correctly or produce a picture that shall command the respect of one's fellow students. To the extent that artists pronounce your work good, you may rest assured it is good.

Nor have I deemed it worth while to burthen you with a mass of instruction as to minor details in the science of painting. It has always appeared to me as if the authors of works written for that purpose, in trying to tell too much, became hopelessly involved, and left their readers in the same predicament. The art of warfare may be imparted to a certain extent, but the narration of former feats of military

strategy can be of slight assistance to the commander who is expecting to engage a cunning adversary next summer. Don't waste too much time trying to learn how others have succeeded. Their methods, their technique, their "quips and quirks" were well enough for them; but they did not get all the apples in the orchard. Some were left; and who knows but that you may find them.

Disregarding everything that may be asserted to the contrary, keep in mind the supreme truth that the beauties in nature are attributable to perfect drawing and the eternal presence of the three primary colors correctly proportioned, or, as the artist would say, absolutely truthful in value. If you are a worshiper at the shrine of those consummate expressions of nature and nature's God which are discoverable everywhere, at all seasons, you will be bound to lead the right sort of a life and think the right kind of thoughts, with

## *POINT OF VIEW*

the result that your pictures, if you paint pictures, your music, if you compose music, your book, if you write books, will reflect something of those great truths. If humanity admires your creations, it is because there is something admirable in your soul. Becoming acquainted with your work, they have the feeling that they know you.

It is a fixed belief with me that the standard of art can no more be raised by academicians than that of literature can be elevated by scholastics, only in so far as their legitimate efforts extend in the sphere of technology. Indirectly they are helping to gain a higher plane, of course. But about the time these worthy toilers succeed in getting their stakes adjusted and well driven, Behold! an unknown stripling, newly released from his mother's apron strings, steps confidently to the front, and by simple daring and his God-given genius, upsets all rules and preconceived

ideas of improvement. It can be of not the slightest consequence whether he comes from the higher or the lower walks of life, since the boundaries of those walks are indeterminable. Sooner or later he is certain to make his appearance amongst the dry bones and neatly wired skeletons of exclusiveness, just as he has been doing with remarkable regularity ever since the dawn of history.

For no doubt whatever exists in the writer's mind but that from his very inception every genius is inspired, nor that the source of his inspiration is the true God. That the genius is unaware of the fact that he is a genius—the knowledge being withheld from him for some inscrutable reason—is but another proof of that Infinite Wisdom that "moves in a mysterious way." The most wonderful mystery of all, revealing the very essence of subtlety, is that he never can know his powers, while others are privileged to perceive and partially

measure them. The world, surveying his work, is able to recognize the creature's mission. "By their fruits ye shall know them." Inspiration coming to him, he calls it "an idea," and without delay proceeds to write it down on paper, paint it on canvas, carve it in marble, or set it to music. Others, he reflects, have had ideas and brought them to a conclusion; wherein should his effort differ from theirs? Having completed it, his product is submitted, never without misgivings, to the critical judgment of a non-personal world. The latter sometimes is able to recognize Divinity behind the conception, and again it is not. The accompanying message would appear to be, "This is a gift withal—take it or leave it, as you like."

A genius is not unlike the sensitized plate employed in photography. In youth and during the period of adolescence countless impressions are made upon his plastic brain, to be taken up afterwards and woven

into the work of later years. His childhood days are continuous journeyings in realms of phantasy—call it dreamland, if you will. Ceaselessly though unconsciously everything about him is clothed in radiant garbs of fancy peculiarly his own, which to him are as truthful and concrete as the earth whereon he treads. To others he is prone to attribute exalted virtues and a purity of thought which they may not possess in the slightest degree, because he sees them with eyes which seek those qualities. All individuals in whom the world has recognized the mysterious, Divine spark of genius must have gathered the greater portion of the material for their work before reaching maturity. Youth sees everything, hears everything; but there exists always this same old difference—one child is a highly sensitized plate, whilst another is just plain glass. The picture, the poem, the operatic composition, are but reflections or reverberations of indelibly stamped im-

*POINT OF VIEW*

pressions on well-poised, harmonious organizations whose souls were attuned to melody from the hour of their birth.

Wishing you long life, happiness and abundant success, I remain, as ever, etc.

THE END

CR  
192











